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Six plain sermons on the  
Sabbath





SIX

PLAIN SERMONS

ON THE

SABBATH.

BY THE

REV. JOSEPH B. OWEN, B. A. ✓

OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,  
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TO

THE VERY REV. GEORGE DAVYS, D.D.

DEAN OF CHESTER,

**These Sermons**

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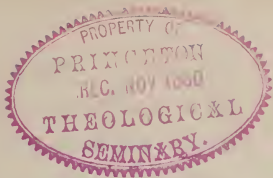
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## P R E F A C E.

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TO THE PARISHIONERS OF WALSALL.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

MANY of you are aware that these Sermons were not prepared for any further publicity, than that which they met with from the congregation assembling in St. Paul's Chapel, Walsall. At the general request of those who heard them from the pulpit, I have been induced to offer them to you again from the press, earnestly beseeching the same Divine blessing to

rest upon their print, which, I humbly trust, attended their delivery. “*Parvis componere magna,*” I may be allowed to adopt the sentiment of an English Father on a similar occasion:—“This publication,” said he, “may be esteemed but like preaching to a more numerous auditory; which if I had done, it would have been called either duty or charity; and, therefore, will not now so readily be censured for vanity, if I make use of all the ways I can to minister to the good of souls.” And again: “Unless I deceive myself, I intend the glory of God sincerely, and the service of Jesus in this publication; and therefore, being I do not seek myself or my own reputation, I shall not be troubled if they be lost in the voices of busy people, so that I be accepted of God, and found of him in the day of the Lord’s visitation.” If but one sabbath-breaker be induced,

by the grace of God, on the perusal of this little volume, to “consider his ways and be wise,” an ample remuneration, and sufficient ground of thankfulness to God, will be afforded to the labour and anxiety of,

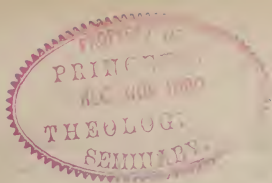
Your humble friend and servant,

In the common faith,

J. B. O.

*Walsall Wood, Feb. 18th, 1835.*





## SERMON I.

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### THE DIVINE APPOINTMENT AND UNIVERSAL OBLIGATION OF THE SABBATH.

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#### GEN. II. 3.

*“And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.”*

You are aware, my brethren, that, according to the opinion of some eminent divines, the Sabbath is a mere ecclesiastical, and not a divine, institution. Though these writers may not have wished hereby to derogate from its authority, and necessary observance, yet, as it is natural to the deceitful heart of man to welcome any excuse for his neglect of religious ordinances, perhaps it is more important than the Anti-sabbatarians seem to have supposed, that the rule of sabbath observance should be withdrawn from the controvertible appointment

of the Church, and referred to the more immediate and unquestionable sanction of her God. Let us, then, take the Word of God for our only text book, and, humbly trusting to the gracious influences of that Holy Spirit promised "to guide us into all truth," seek it, with the faithful hope of finding it.

We shall endeavour to prove the originality of the sabbath, with a view to the establishment of its universal obligation, as opposed to its restriction to a purely Jewish origin and obligation; and, in a subsequent discourse, adopt this feature of universality as the ground of our inquiries into the substitution of the Christian Sabbath.

What then do we mean by an *original* sabbath? We intend that sabbath, or seventh day, blessed and sanctified in the text (as we shall endeavour to prove from the passage), at the end of the first week of time, when, by his own rest from material labour, God was pleased to consecrate a day sacred to the memory of a finished creation. We presume that they who affirm that the sabbath commenced in Moses are not prepared virtually to deny the inspiration of the Pentateuch, by sus-

pecting its illustrious author of interpolating falsehood in its sacred rolls. Yet this must they do, or deny the genuineness of our text; for Moses wrote the words, and Moses quoted them as God's words, in republishing them in the decalogue; there referring the sanctification of the sabbath to the finish of creation; and the six days' labour, to the amount of time God was pleased to occupy in the work.

The words of the text are further canonized in their reference to an original sabbath, by St. Paul's citation and use of them in Heb. iv. 4. The whole of the apostle's reasoning upon the passage is built upon the supposition of such a sabbath. Then what are we to understand by God's blessing and sanctifying the first seventh day? Did Moses merely insert it with a view to the Jewish sabbath which he was about to institute, that he might forge an authority and antiquity to appeal to? Is there an instance of such fraud paralleled among any other of the inspired writers? Or will it be granted that God himself sanctified a sabbath then, but with a view to his future chosen people? Was God's example in the sanctification of a particular day, a day commemorating an event equally interesting

to all men, to be only followed by a particular people, who formed scarce a ten-thousandth part of mankind, and that 2500 years afterwards?— Or was the day sanctified, that is, made holy, set apart, and separated from the other six, to make a sabbath for the angels, or for Deity himself? No. “The sabbath was made for man,” says our Lord, “and not man,” or any particular race of men, “for the sabbath.” If this sabbath then were thus early instituted for man, the first man would have been of course informed of it: Adam was the representative of his race; his race, as the case of the fall proved, were implicated in his obligations; that institution, therefore, whose observance was imperative upon Adam, was, and is, imperative upon all his race. But there is no single allusion to a sabbath, say they, from Adam to Moses. True, my brethren. But the Book of Genesis and part of Exodus, contain all the history of the whole world, till near a thousand years after the flood. Is it a wonder, then, that in annals so brief and cursory there should be no allusion to either the observance or neglect of sabbaths? There is not a word about sabbaths during the whole of the Babylonish captivity. Yet will it thence be



argued, that during that period the Jews observed no sabbath? Nor is there any notice of the Israelites' neglect of sabbath till the time of Isaiah, 731 years after the events recorded in Exodus; yet will any one acquainted with their history contend, that there had been no neglect till then? As well might our opponents contend there never was a prayer upon the earth till the time of Abraham, because prayer is never mentioned till we hear God directing Abraham to pray.

But further, though the sabbath is not by name alluded to, perhaps it can be shewn that there are accounts in the patriarchal times, from which its observance may be almost necessarily inferred;—we shall notice these in their order of history.

Cain and Abel are said to bring their offerings “in process of time,” or as the margin reads it, “at the end of the days.” Now no other division of time is recorded, except that division involved in the idea of a seventh day; most probably, then, the “end of the days” would mean, the end of the week, *i. e.* the sabbath. Again; there is nothing natural in the idea of sacrifices. This ordinance must have been revealed; from the

same source would they be admonished of the proper day to offer them. Not, perhaps, that the patriarchs, like too many professing Christians in our day, offered worship only on the sabbath; but if there were any worship at all, the inference is in favour of the chief worship on the day of God's appointment.

It appears that, notwithstanding the early outrage and sacrilege of Abel's murder (a murder at the altar of sacrifice, and therefore most probably committed on the sabbath), religion began soon to be cultivated; as even at the birth of Enos, grandson of Adam, it is said, (Gen. iv. 26,) "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." From this period scripture contains a succession of worshippers of God (though the most eminent are named at long intervals), up to the time of Moses, from the accounts of some of whom much valuable inference may be drawn. We need not dwell upon the memoirs of Enoch, Noah, or Abraham; but upon the character of Melchisedec a few remarks may be offered.

He is said to be a Priest of the Most High God;—the first mention of a priest in the history of man. In ancient days, the father or patriarch of a family was the domestic chaplain or priest.

(Oh that there were more fathers like Job, offering sacrifices for his children!) This Melchisedec was also King of Salem, patriarch of a community; doubtless, therefore, a public priest, exercising his functions in the little state over which he presided.

Now a public priest involves the idea of public worship; public worship could only take place on days stated, and publicly known; a priest of the Most High God would not be likely to choose any other day than that of his God's appointment; Melchisedec therefore was most probably a priest of the sabbath. Whoever Melchisedec was, these inferences from his office can in no case be impugned. Some suppose he was our blessed Lord himself; but the apostle quotes Melchisedec as a type of Christ, and a type is not the antitype, nor a shadow the substance. He is confessedly a mysterious person.

Passing on from Abraham and Isaac, to Jacob, we find Laban directing Jacob, on his marriage with Leah, saying, "Fulfil her week;" and whether this referred to a week of days, or the week of seven years, which the patriarch served for both Leah and Rachel, in either case the term *week* proves their knowledge of that singular division of

time. Upon which fact, more anon. Proceeding through the patriarch's descendants, settled for 400 years in Egypt, we admit that during that period not a name eminent for holiness is recorded; nor is that to be wondered at, considering the hard slavery and oppression which they endured, and that slavery is the natural and historical cause of a demoralized and degraded people. The iron, that galls the limb, "enters into the soul" of the captive, and debases his life. It was so with the tribes of Jacob till the advent of Moses. But previous to his delivery of the law, we find him asking permission for his people to go out into the desert to sacrifice. He propose it to the elders in language that presumes their previous acquaintance with the ordinance of sacrifice; upon which facts the probable observance of the sabbath may be inferred, as before, though by reason of their bondage it might be very rare and occasional.

Again. Perhaps the strongest argument for the sabbath being known before its enforcement in the decalogue, may be drawn from the wording of the law itself. Neither in the words themselves, nor in any previous or subsequent reference or commentary upon them, do we find

either of the accompaniments universally expected in the appointment of a new institution ; viz. the reason of the observance, and the manner in which it is to be observed. Now at the institution of the rite of circumcision, and of the ordinance of the passover, God had already vouchsafed both reasons and directions ; but in the sabbath neither are given, doubtless because the people's knowledge of both is presumed in their previous possession of a sabbath. Further confirmed is this inference, in the wording of the commandment,—“ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” It is not “ Remember the seventh day, which God now appoints for your sabbath,” but “ Remember *the* sabbath.” What sabbath could they be told to remember, if they never heard of it before ? But we may be answered : “ They are informed, a few words further, that the *seventh* day is the sabbath.” How did they know then which was the *seventh* day ? — the identical seventh day which commemorated the creation, to which the law referred for its sanction ? If they knew it by the regular succession of a sabbath, or seventh holyday, by which, from Adam to Moses, the days and weeks of time had been computed and dated, the point

is clear, and establishes our position; but otherwise, the language of the law is unintelligible. If we compute the respective ages of Methuselah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and Amram, the father of Moses, we find that six persons only could have passed the tradition from Adam to the Hebrews. Furthermore, in the repetition of the law in Deut. v. 15, another reason is given for hallowing the sabbath, peculiar and interesting to the Jews, which was, their deliverance from Egypt on that day. But how could they ascertain the coincidence in the day of the finish of creation, with their deliverance from Egypt, unless the original sabbath had been by some means handed down the tide of tradition, till it reached their cognizance? We are not to be answered, that Egypt, famous for her astronomers, possessed every means of dividing and computing time into its various particles, from a year to a day, and that the Hebrews resident among them borrowed their calculations. Without some specific successional mark of acknowledgment, all "the learning of the Egyptians" could not have dived into the by-gone days of centuries, and brought up the pearl of the original, identical sabbath, to which Moses referred, even if they

possessed the inclination to attempt the task. Yet these Egyptians, and the Syrians, and most oriental nations, appear to have used *weeks*; and quotations might be adduced from a number of ancient writers of different nations, and nations too who could not have had it from Moses, wherein the *seventh* day was alluded to as holy. Whence did all these derive their knowledge and use of weeks, confessedly an artificial measure of time, if not from the tradition of a sabbath? There is nothing in nature to suggest a week; nature is man's dial-plate for his years, in the annual revolution of the sun; for his months, in the changing phases of the moon; for his days, in the alternations of light and darkness; but she has no fourth and intermediate finger to point out the sevenths of time. Deity himself devised and revealed to us our weeks.

Once more. We perceive no danger in the admission, that the sabbath in the time of Moses became peculiarly, though, as we shall hope to shew, not exclusively, a Jewish sabbath. It became peculiarly theirs, in being appointed unto them "for a sign," as Ezekiel says, (chap. xx. 12;) though he, who would argue that on this account, sabbaths were not existing prior to that

appointment of them as a *sign*, might as well argue that there never was a rainbow formed by the sun's rays reflected upon falling rain, till a shower fell to make one "a sign" for Noah. It became peculiarly theirs, because God selected them from among the nations, as the children of his promise, to be the committee of the oracles of God, the dispensers of his truth to the world around them; "a nation of priests," as they are termed, to be chaplains to their species, the witnesses of Jehovah, the instruments of his providence, and reflectors of his grace or justice to the vast moral republic of man. Hence they were located in a peculiarly central quarter of the globe; and had they been faithful to their heavenly ordination, the sacred mountains of Jewry might have been the pulpits of the world. In this view it is evident grace was not restricted to them; how could it be so to its *dispensers*? Their obligations, which were not manifestly of a nature peculiar to their polity, assuredly are binding upon us. The ten commandments are of a moral nature, and none but the Antinomian denies the universal obligation of the moral law. They were delivered under circumstances that distinguished them, and were evidently *intended*



to distinguish them from all or any other of the laws of Moses. They were published amid the thunders and lightnings of Mount Sinai, and with the immediate voice of God. Moses merely wrote the other laws in a book ; these were twice written with God's own hand on tables of stone, the direct symbols in ancient times of the perpetuity of the record. The fourth commandment was incorporated with these imperative ten. No man objects to the other nine ; then " what God hath joined, let no man put asunder." Let their obligation be equal, and let this very commandment of the sabbath announce its own and their universal obligation. Not only " the manservant and the maid-servant," who might be Jews, but " the stranger also," the foreigner that sojourned with them, were to keep holy the sabbath of their common Lord. " Is he the God of the Jews only ? Is he not also of the Gentiles ? " " One ordinance," says Moses, " shall be both for you of the congregation, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever."

The time would fail us even to glance at various other particulars of the philosophy of a sabbath, which serve to demonstrate its

universality. We suggest a few for your private reflection and enlargement. Man was not fallen when the sabbath was first given;—it commemorated a creation in which all men were equally interested;—was intended for devotional uses in which all men are equally concerned;—furnished a day of rest which to all men is equally necessary;—was a type of heaven, which to all men should be equally lovely and engaging. Was it a type of heaven? St. Paul so regards it, in the Epistle to the Hebrews; Jews and early Christians so regarded it: then, if a type, it must remain in force till the antitype appears. Besides universality, then, here is another feature of *perpetuity* in the obligation.

We need not recapitulate our considerations; we trust they have enabled you satisfactorily to conclude, not only that the Jewish sabbath was the original one, and therefore of universal obligation, but that the Jewish sabbath itself was divinely intended, and ordained to be, during that dispensation, of similarly universal obligation. Then Moses only reinforced an old and established institution;—Moses was the moral law-giver to the Gentiles, though through the Jews;—Moses began his Master's ministry to his own

kindred, that Christ, when he came, might “open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.”

We shall consider our first point then, viz. An original sabbath, divinely appointed to be of universal obligation, as proved, and prepared for the premise of our next discourse. In the meantime we apply ourselves, in conclusion, to some practical use of the subject, considered thus far.

We remark, first, *The peculiar sanction of the sabbath's dedication.* God himself solemnized the first sabbath of the world. A sabbath dawn,—man being created on the sixth day,—was the first light that welcomed the human soul into conscious existence! The sabbath of heaven was the first man knew; the sabbath of heaven is the last he hopes for: blessed be the Lord of the sabbath! Were, then, the gradations of the work of creation accessory and subservient to the foundation of the sabbath? Did He, who could have spoken all things into sudden and immediate existence, elaborate the universe into six days' creation, that his rest upon the seventh might teach man the lesson of a sabbath, and resolve him in how much time he should “do all that he had to do,” and when to rest, and pray?

He did all this for you and me, my brethren : let us not fail to follow after his awful example.

Men are wont to attribute increased authority and reverence to such institutions as are dedicated to their respective purposes by individuals of rank and power. Hence the foundation-stone of public edifices are frequently laid by personages of eminent station : viewed in this light, what greater sanction want we for our observance of the sabbath ? It had been much if an eminent saint or father of the church had appointed the solemnity, or if an apostle or prophet, or more, if an angel from heaven, who had also promised his invariable attendance on the day ; but the sabbath was ordained of the Father of men and angels, the omnipotent and omnipresent One, who promised of old, and, as we shall hereafter see, confirmed it anew,—“ In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.” Our annual wake-Sunday, a festival strangely corrupted from its original intention, used to bring its crowds to commemorate the consecration of their church ; every sabbath was a solemn wake to commemorate the building of a world ; every Sunday still commemorates the new creation of immortal souls !

“ ’Twas great to speak a world from nought,  
 ’Twas greater to redeem.”

This is a wake which is not solemnized by a mere annual or monthly celebration of the event, but on every return of the wondrous day. But alas, how few there are who keep these wakes! They shall swarm in busy numbers to the scenes of vanity and graver wickedness with which our country wakes are disgraced, but few would keep even the *annual* Sunday, unless, like at the Passover of old, because “a feast was nigh.”

They morally incur the taxation of our blessed Lord to the selfish and carnal multitude in his day,—“They follow him not because of his miracles, but because they did eat of his loaves, and were filled.” Though “the bread of life sent down from heaven” be freely offered them, like the rebels in the wilderness, they nauseate the heavenly manna, and lust after the flesh;—the greatest curse that can befall them is the answering their own wilful prayers!

*Secondly, We learn from the antiquity of the sabbath a signal proof of God’s mercy to man, in its preservation so long.*

Doubtless there were but few up to the age of

Noah who enjoyed the gracious ordinance. In his day its celebration was confined to a single family, and yet the long-suffering love of God forebore to withdraw his means of grace from the world, for the sake of that family.

Noah in the deluge, we read, sent out the dove thrice, at intervals of seven days, *i. e.* sent her out, most probably, on three successive sabbath mornings. For though the whole world is drowned, there is a floating chapel in the ark, where Noah and his little crew celebrate their lonely sabbath over the grave of creation. Were the cities of the plain, and we know not how many more, burned and humbled into the dust, not of penitence, but of desolation? Another and a blessed fire from heaven feeds the lamp of the sanctuary upon the family altar of Lot!— Does the wilderness devour the whole generation of Moses? Joshua and Caleb bear the day of creation and of exodus into the Land of Promise. Was Israel rent in twain? Judah led captive into pagan Babylonia, and “other lords continually in dominion over her?” The Son of Man when he came was still Lord of an extant sabbath. Are the tribes of Jacob now scattered among the Gentiles, without a polity, or tribe, or ruler, or

temple, or local habitation, or a name? Still do they bow the knee on the seventh day, albeit, morally, to an unknown God.

All "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes!" Marvellous for its wisdom;—had the Lord God suffered his sabbath to fail on the earth, his testimony had perished with it. Marvellous for its mercy;—had the means of grace departed, the world might have sighed Ichabod o'er her hope of glory. Marvellous for its power;—considering the poor minority, the little flock that God has ever had in the world, it is all of God alone, that the enemies of truth have not been able to quench it for 6000 years. Marvellous for its glory;—though weak and fallen beings have had the custody of the ordinance, still it survives, and has been the constant means of glory to God. We believe there never was a period, that the earth was without a living witness of Jehovah; and, therefore, we believe there never was a period, in which a sabbath was wholly neglected. Never did the sabbath sun float across the blue arch of heaven, without smiling upon some lonely worshipper of God, somewhere, upon his knees. Has he never risen and set again, my brethren,

without witness of your worship? Oh, if each one began to enumerate the sabbaths he had violated since he was first conscious of a Lord's-day, what a black list most of us would have to render up before the tribunal of conscience! A heavier summons to account lies before us, brethren; then give it up at once; "judge yourselves" before the bosom God within you, lest before a more open, dread, and final bar, "ye be judged of the Lord." "Humble yourselves in the sight of God, and he will lift you up,"—lift you up from the dust and ashes of repentance here, and from the dust and ashes of the sepulchre hereafter, and "lift you up for ever." Be not ashamed of "the sighing of a contrite heart;" though man may deride it, it is that which "thou, O God, wilt not despise." The world may call it a weakness, but it is a weakness in which God's strength will be made perfect. Man knows not that the soul is never so noble as when she confesses, "Behold, I am vile;" and never so strong, as when most conscious of her own weakness; and never so safe, as when most alarmed at her spiritual dangers: "that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God;" and on the contrary, man



despises that which God "delighteth to honour." Come then, ye professing Christians, become the apostle's Jew in spirit, "whose praise is not of men, but of God."

*Thirdly.* We learn from our reasoning on the subject, *how gratuitous their scepticism, who avail themselves of the silence of scripture, to speak against the Divine authority of a sabbath.*

Why would they make the sabbath a mere ecclesiastical, a human appointment? Would they rob the ordinance of its sanction, to neutralize the penalty of its violation? "No," may some of them answer; "our only object is the truth, and nothing beyond the truth." Alas, many a good and many a great mind has been beguiled by the evil one, on the very point where they thought they were disarming him. It is unsafe to put off the shield of faith, even in the search after the truth of her doctrines. Can the mere *negative* ground, which is all they have for their assault, be enough to warrant their questioning the authority of a positive means of grace; an ordinance of acknowledged blessedness; of paramount necessity to the well-being of religion? Whatever show of reason may be seen in their argument, there surely is none in the object of

their proof. The Lord save us from the presumptuous use of faculties ; and especially keep us from ever violating this holy day, from any fond conceit of its being a man's foundling, an ordinance of human device, and therefore of non-essential observance !

*Fourthly.* We learn from the *originality* of the sabbath, subject of thankfulness to God, that though man fell from God's presence in Eden, he fell not from his spiritual presence on the sabbath. Though he lost paradise, he lost not that which every week made a paradise restored,—the presence of a prayer-answering God. We know not how Adam solemnized his sabbath in the garden, but paradise must have had more heaven in it on the Lord's day. It would to innocent man be a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord ; but to the fallen man, how sweet in mercy, how rich in grace, how likely to remind him of that happy state from which he fell, and to quicken his hopes of that better state, to which the covenant of grace prepared him to rise again !

Though a very rebel and ingrate, God still deigns to speak with him ; and his language is a promise to the first offender's seed, " that it

should bruise the head of the serpent ;” their own sentence was fulfilled already, the serpent *had* “bruised their heel,” and made them fall ; Adam felt the first was done, he believed the second would be ; but we, my brethren, believe them both accomplished, and the Blessed One that bruised the last has thereby healed the first. Has he done it for you, my brethren ? Beside the serpent’s head, has he bruised in your bosom the serpent’s heart ? In “the old” Adam we are all “born in sin,” and in “the old serpent” “all shapen in iniquity.” We are hereby liable to another fall ; as the first with Adam, so the next with Satan. The first fall was grievous, but the next will be without remedy ; the first was from paradise, the next will be from heaven : and sure as, at the first, man fell into sin, so sure, at the next, will he fall into hell. There, already, weep the fallen angels, living evidences of the justice that endureth for ever ; and “if God spared not the angels that sinned”—you know the sequel ; the argument and appeal is St. Peter’s : carry it home, my brethren, let it dwell within your bosoms ;—if He spared not the beings who had no second offer of mercy, no second probation, no sabbath for their souls for ever, how shall

he spare man, highly-favoured, yet finally impenitent man, who has twice fallen, who both robbed the tree of knowledge and destroyed the tree of life?

God help us to be merciful to our own souls!

*Lastly.* As at the first sabbath man was un-fallen, and he kept it in that state of innocence in which he was created; so the last sabbath, of which the former is but a type, must be entered upon in the same innocence, and this must be the effect of a new creation. None but new creatures will be admitted into the sabbath of sabbaths above. Then, brethren, our reflections have brought us to the conclusion, "Ye must be born again." Nothing short of the new birth unto righteousness will enable us to profit by the weekly sabbath here, or the eternal one hereafter. Then let us pray, my brethren, to be delivered out of "this body of death," into "the hidden life in Christ;" to be born again, not of the flesh, but of the spirit; for the more we look into ourselves, the more we find that we need a change of heart, a change of life and conversation, a change of views of revealed truth, a change of tastes and appetites, a change of hopes and aspirations, that we may at last be thought

worthy, through grace, of that final and everlasting change, by His commission and promise, "who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." But if the soul be not changed here, the body will not be changed hereafter: time is the school-room of eternity. Oh, that we may learn its awful lessons "to-day, while it is called to-day, before the night cometh," when no man can learn, when all must go home, when probations must end, and glory or condemnation begin their eternity!

## SERMON II.

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### THE SUBSTITUTION OF THE FIRST FOR THE SEVENTH DAY.

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MARK II. 27, 28.

*“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.”*

IN our last discourse we arrived at the conclusion, that the sabbath observed by the Jews was none other than the original day, which we first shewed God had ordained in the beginning. Upon which principle we demonstrated its universal obligation, and from other sources also we discovered its perpetuity. Our next business will naturally be to inquire, whether the gospel dispensation disannulled this obligation; or, in other words, whether the substitution of the first for the seventh day of the week, has deprived the sabbath of its original sanction and authority?

The sabbath was part of that law, of which Divine authority declared, “that heaven and earth should pass away, but his law should not

pass away till all be fulfilled:" that is, plainly, to the end of the world, or so long as there were any subjects of its obedience in existence. The ordinance, then, is perpetual. But the sabbath consists of two parts—the holy rest, and the day on which it is observed. A variety of considerations will be presently adduced to show, that the *substance* of the institution might remain unaltered, though the precise day of celebration were changed; and if the change was effected by an authority equal to that of the original appointment, men may not only lawfully observe the sabbath so changed, but they have no discretionary choice about the obligation. If our former proofs of the universality and perpetuity of the obligation served up to the period of the gospel, we shall now preface our discourse with the inquiry, whether "the Author and Finisher of our faith" himself abrogated the sabbath. If he did not, but, on the contrary, observed it, then the sabbath is confirmed in the gospel dispensation.

Let us, then, ask the Evangelists, his sacred biographers, and we find he regularly mingled in the public worship of God on the sabbath-days. If we turn to Luke iv. 16, we find it

said of our Lord, “ He came to Nazareth, where he had been *brought up*: and, as *his custom was*, he went into the synagogue on the *sabbath-day*, and stood up for to read.” In the face of this decisive passage, however, our text is quoted as a proof against our Lord’s observance of the sabbath; but we trust that a little regard to the circumstances under which the words were uttered, will rather prove them to form another argument in favour of our position. Our Lord used the text in answer to the complaint of the Pharisees, that his disciples had plucked the ears of corn, alleging that such an act was unlawful on the sabbath-day. The same objection had been raised when he healed the woman of her eighteen years’ infirmity. Jesus, therefore, as his custom was, chose the opportunity which the occasion offered to rebuke the Pharisees (who had corrupted every thing, and the sabbath among the rest,) for their “ teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” He declared, therefore, that works of charity and of necessity were allowed by the law of God; and, on another occasion, referred them to the precept that contained the allowance. The meaning, then, of the passage,



is clearly this; "The sabbath was made for man,"—for man's good,—and, therefore, all such works as man's good rendered necessary, were lawful. "Man was not made for the sabbath;" man was created before the sabbath; man was not adapted to the sabbath, but the sabbath to man; "therefore the Son of Man," in his office, as peculiar minister to man's necessities, "is Lord of the sabbath," is lawfully employed when thus devoting it to some of the purposes of its original institution; and Lord of it, in rejecting "those traditions of men which made void the commandments of God." Was this any case of violation of the sabbath? on the contrary, it honoured the day. Our Lord himself, then, kept the sabbath-day holy:—did he then intend his gospel to abrogate it? We observed before, that the enforcement of the sabbath was contained in the tables of the moral, *i. e.* the perpetual law. These tables our Lord frequently alluded to in terms of especial reverence; he called them, by way of eminence, "The Commandments," and thus distinguished them from the other precepts of Moses, just as the Bible, literally the Book, is also styled "the Scriptures," to distinguish it

from any other book or writing. He declared, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." By the kingdom of heaven (a metaphorical expression, borrowed from the Jewish theocracy) is here meant, the gospel dispensation. Evidently then, these commandments of the moral law were confirmed in the gospel. The sabbath was one of these commandments; therefore, the sabbath is confirmed in the gospel, unless it can be shown some subsequent and special exception is recorded against it. Now no such exception is any where to be found, pretended or otherwise; but, on the contrary, every previous or subsequent allusion our Lord makes to the sabbath, favours the perpetuity of its obligation. Hence, when he foresaw the desolation and fall of Jerusalem, a period at which the gospel was upwards of thirty years' establishment, he speaks of the sabbath as then still in existence: "Pray ye that your flight," says he, "be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day;" that ye may avoid the necessity of either

violating the ordinance by travel, or submitting to destruction.

On the whole, then, we conclude, since our Lord himself observed the sabbath; since the commandments, of which the observance of the sabbath forms a part, were declared by him to be binding under the gospel dispensation; since no exception was made to that particular commandment of the sabbath, either by the Lord or his disciples; therefore the sabbath does not expire with the Jewish dispensation, but is decidedly confirmed in the gospel.

Having ascertained this important fact, we proceed to the question, whether the substitution of the *first* for the *seventh* day of the week affects this confirmation, or deprives our sabbath of the original sanction and authority of the former. In order to this, it may be profitable to inquire,

I. Whether there were not sundry Jewish peculiarities attached to the sabbath, which rendered a change of the day, under the gospel dispensation, desirable.

II. Whether such a change was actually made by competent authority.

III. Whether this change accorded in its circumstances with the doctrine of a sabbath.

And, finally, we shall deduce from the whole, the obligation of the christian sabbath.

May He whose infinite love, and wisdom, and condescension, "made the sabbath for man," sanctify our reflections to our saving conviction of its importance to the welfare of our souls!

I. *There were some Jewish peculiarities which rendered a change of the sabbath-day desirable, under the gospel dispensation.* "No man," saith our Lord, "putteth new wine into old bottles;" and what was applied to fasting, may be seen to apply to our question. The peculiarity of interest to the Jews in the sabbath commemorating their deliverance from Egypt on that day, could not fail of rendering the same sabbath an inconvenient day of memorial to those whose ancestors had experienced no such deliverance. It would have perpetuated that mark of exclusiveness about the Jews, which it was one prominent feature in the gospel to put away: it would have kept up too much of "the middle wall of partition." But a day that should commemorate a greater, a more permanent deliverance, and one that was equally and universally interesting, would be manifestly

preferable for the new race of sabbath-keepers, brought into covenant by the gospel.

2. The sabbath, as we observed in our last, was appointed for "a sign" of God's covenant with the Jews; but when a new and better covenant was made, not with the Jews only, but with the Gentiles also, that should bring in the whole house of Adam, surely that sabbath-day should pass away with the particular covenant of which it was "the sign," that another should be substituted in its place, universal in its references as the covenant it commemorates.

3. The ceremonial and judicial economy of the Jewish observance of the sabbath rendered their manner further unfit for universal adoption. Ceremony was to end. The penalty of death imposed upon every ritual violation of the day, was not accordant with the spirit of the gospel of peace, was not suited to a dispensation adapted for the universal embrace of man. It was profitable for its appointed time to the Jews as a people, but was not intended, as it was not fitted, for the general body of mankind.

These considerations may serve to show the desirableness of a day more comprehensive in the objects of its celebration, more generally

interesting in its association of events, and more congenial to the spirit of the new dispensation in the nature of its requirements.

II. *We inquire whether this change of the sabbath was actually made, and by competent authority.*

We have this day sanctified the first day of the week instead of the seventh. We received it from the missionaries who converted our island; they received it from their fathers; and ecclesiastical history informs us, that the same day has been the unanimous sabbath of all christian nations, up to the time of the apostles. How was it, then, that christian churches became so early and so universally unanimous in their adoption of this day? If we turn to the Word of God, we shall soon discover by what authority "old things passed away," and the old sabbath among the rest, "and all things became new."

"I was in the Spirit," says St. John, the last survivor of the apostles, "on the Lord's-day." But every day is the Lord's; this definite day was, therefore, some peculiar one, presumed to be known to the seven churches, to whom he was about to write. What other day was this

likely to be, than the same to which frequent previous allusion had been made, in other parts of the evangelists' and apostles' writings? the day which the Lord had made peculiarly his own, by rising that day from the tomb? There is not a single instance in which the old sabbath is so named; *the Lord's-day* must, therefore, refer to one generally known and observed by Christians towards the close of the first century, when the Apocalypse was written. The appellation was probably borrowed from the 118th Psalm, where David, celebrating the future stone, that was to become the head stone of the corner, exclaims, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice, and be glad in it."

Well might the veteran apostle feel himself in the Spirit on such a day!—it was on that day God the Son arose from the dead, and appeared to him and his sainted fellows;—it was on that day God the Holy Ghost sanctified their last Pentecost by the outpouring of his Spirit upon them;—it was on that day the little band of apostolic missionaries met in secret at Jerusalem, to devise the evangelization of a world!

We can trace allusions to these weekly meetings up to the first day of that week, the memory of whose marvellous events shall survive, when time and its divisions be forgotten eternally. We refer your attention first to John xx. 19, which contains the account of Jesus's first visit to his disciples on the day of his resurrection. That he should visit them on that day may not seem remarkable, except in connexion with his next visit, which did not take place till the following first day of the week, when we read, in the 26th verse, his disciples were again assembled. Why did he conceal himself? Why withdraw his Divine presence for the whole week, if not to intimate his approval of their devoting the day of his resurrection to solemn assembly?

We have not time to dwell upon other references to this first day of the week. From that allusion in Acts xx. 7, and in 1 Cor. xvi. 2, we find these meetings were for devotional purposes, and that alms were then collected for the poor, as was the custom on the Jewish sabbath, so that these days were observed as *sabbaths*; and though on occasions we find the disciples also conforming to the Jewish sabbath, the



expediency of this act excused their compliance : not to mention it was the only day they could get public speech to a Jewish congregation, and not to mention there was no evil in two sabbaths the same week. It were no harm if, in a devotional sense, we all observed a seventh, or a sabbath-part, of every day.

Why then, may we be asked, did not our Lord speak plainly? Why are we left merely to infer the Divine sanction of so important an event as the change of the sabbath? The circumstance may be accounted for from two considerations, touching both the character of our Lord himself, and the circumstances of his disciples.

Touching our Lord, “ He came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law ;” not to alter, but to obey ; for “ thus it behoved him to fulfil all righteousness.” He was circumcised, was baptized, kept the Passover, began his ministry at thirty, and in all things was perfect in the law of God, that when the sacrifice was offered up on Calvary, it might be “ a Lamb without blemish and without spot.” Consequently, as “ the Christ,” he could, and he did, alter nothing ; but after his resurrection, the character he sustained in relation to the law of God, was,

as he announced it on the cross, "finished." He had accomplished all; he was now no longer delegate, but strictly autocrat: "all power," said he, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth." By the act, then, of his resurrection on the first day of the week, by his lying in the grave the preceding day, and thus refusing that honour to the old sabbath, an act that could not have been the effect of accident, for "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" met his death "in due time," at a known, decreed, and appointed time, for there is nothing accidental in the ways of Providence; by his twice, if not oftener, repeated visitations to his disciples, after weekly intervals on that day; by his mission of the promised Holy Ghost on that day; and, may we not add, by the evident tokens of his blessing on the means of grace ever since employed on that day; by all these emphatic indications of his will, are we not sufficiently authorized in inferring his Divine appointment of the first in the stead of the seventh day's observance of a sabbath? But why not decide it by a positive precept? Let the circumstances of the disciples answer for this omission. He forbore on their account; he had

already himself tried the fury of Jewish prejudice on the point of the sabbath, and therefore felt for his little flock of poor, despised, and friendless disciples, who were about to commence their ministry among the most stern and bigoted religionists on earth. Well he knew, that had they began at once openly to abolish the Jewish sabbath, and declare publicly their reasons of the substitution of the new one, that all the body of the disciples had certainly been accused, under the old law, of violation of the sabbath, and, according to its penalty, be put to death. Nothing but a continual miraculous interference had prevented this result; and, therefore, as the disciples were, by every lawful means, to conciliate their countrymen, by giving them the honour of their first sermons, and becoming, in an innocent degree, “all things to all men, that by any means they might save some, surely these considerations are a sufficiently natural explanation why no formal announcement of the change of the sabbath took place, but that the fact would be left to be inferred from our Lord’s visits, and from the practice of the apostles.

III. *We inquire whether this change*

*accorded in its circumstances with the doctrine of a sabbath.* In whatever light we view the day, now substituted for the seventh, in all the uses of a sabbath, its desirableness is abundantly manifest, as also its accordance, every way, with the intention of a sabbath.

We may remark this accordance in four points of view.

1. As a day of commemoration. If the former sabbath celebrated the creation of a world, the latter celebrates an event of infinitely higher importance, of infinitely more moment to man, and glory to God,—the redemption of a world,—a new creation. The first was after a glorious work, the next after a glorious sacrifice, of God. Both referred to Deity, and both commemorate completion and rest, “for he that is entered into his rest;” says the apostle, “he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his:” and both these great works, the former creation and the new moral creation, are still substantially observed. Still one day’s rest in seven, preceded by six days of secular labour, commemorates the work of creation, and the Almighty’s rest at its conclusion; hence, still in our prayers we glorify “God the Father, maker

of heaven and earth;" though the institution of the sabbath has been so enlarged, that we might also glorify "God the Son, who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven."

2. We remark this accordance with the doctrine of a sabbath as a day of rest. Still the original precept is obeyed, of consecrating, as at first, one day in seven. It is evident the particular day is not of so much moment as the principle involved in the devotion to God's service, of a seventh of our time. It is physically impossible that all the world could be unanimous in their observance of the same identical day. The form of the earth, and its relation to the sun, prevent such a coincidence; since, when with us it would be sabbath-day, it would be with our antipodes the next night; so that there would always necessarily be one day's difference in the period of celebration. He who "made the round world, and them that dwell therein," was aware of this peculiarity when he left the sabbatic law, at its original institution, in general terms. A seventh day is sanctified, but not a word of that seventh day being fixed for the end of every succeeding week. In the words of the law in *Exod. xx. 11*, the blessing is not annexed

to the seventh day, but to the *sabbath*, which seems to intimate that the importance is of the institution, and not of the day on which it is celebrated. The seventh day was necessarily blessed at the original institution, because in the nature of things no other sabbath-day could be then blessed, except the first that existed. But God's alteration of the blessing, and consecration in the decalogue, from the *day*, to the sabbath generally, saves the christian church from that doubt and anxiety which a confirmation of the blessing on a particular day had probably excited. Then the change of the day of celebration has not affected the principle of the sabbath. We have still an equal rest, still the original proportion of labour. To us the substitution of one day for the other presents a sensible change; but to Him who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," "with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," it is still the same sabbath. There is a difference to man, but there is identity with God.

3. We remark this accordance with the doctrine of a sabbath, touching Divine appointment. If our foregoing reflections on the share our Lord had in the appointment of the christian

sabbath, be deemed satisfactory, his immediate authority in the institution confers equal sanction on the new ordinance, with that which the old possessed. At all events, it is clear the ordinance was appointed by the apostles; they were men acting under the direct influence of the Spirit promised to "guide them into all truth;" they were but the clerks or amanuenses of the Holy Ghost; whatever institution, therefore, they enforced, is binding upon us, with all the imperativeness of a Divine authority.

4. There is also the accordance with a sabbath, as a day of devotional exercises. These could not be ill-affected by any mere change of day, but the interests of piety may be materially consulted in a change to a day, that associates in its return the remembrance of the grandest act of God to man. If devotional feeling be more likely to be quickened at the consideration of God's infinite love, than of his infinite power, the day that celebrates the consummation of a world's redemption is a preferable one for a sabbath, than that which merely celebrates a world's creation: much more desirable is the adoption of a day which serves virtually to commemorate both the work of power and the labour

of love. At all events, it cannot be denied but what the sabbath has been the constant and continued means of glorifying God in the conversion of thousands of souls. It is evidently, therefore, a wise ordinance; and those who deny its Divine appointment, attribute to man's invention an ordinance which has been the most important to religion, and which it was impossible for an all-wise God to overlook.

We cannot here enlarge further on this point; we trust to demonstrate the fitness of the day of resurrection, rather than any other event in the Redeemer's life, for a day of christian commemoration, in our next discourse. Upon the whole, we conclude, and we need not recapitulate the evidence, that the sabbath has been confirmed in all its original sanction and authority by the gospel of Christ. This gospel is an universal and perpetual dispensation; the sabbath, therefore, which it has incorporated and established with it, must be also of an universal and perpetual obligation. We leave the proofs upon your consciences, and in the mean time, we turn, in conclusion, to some brief practical use of our investigations.

1. We learn, from our reflections, the incon-



sistency of any professor of Christianity denying the duty of observing as holy, the day on which Christ, whose sacred name he assumes, triumphed over the grave. Do they “profess and call themselves Christians,” and yet think lightly of a day, when “the Christ” most fully proved himself to be their God?—a day, without whose mighty deed of resurrection the doctrines they confess had never reached their knowledge;—a day, when God the Saviour triumphed over death, “and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;” not for himself, that he had done already in heaven, but for us, he vanquished him in earth and hell; a day, that accomplished the office of the Son of Man, and resumed the glory of the Son of God? Has earth, in her history, any deed so wonderful? Surely heaven has no tale so marvellous as this. Is it not a day, then, most worthy of devout remembrance, and of thankful celebration? Angels in their songs, on earth and in heaven, have eulogized the common wonder; and shall man, on whose behalf the charity of heaven has been taxed to the utmost,—shall he alone, though the only being who receives the boon,—shall he alone, thankless, fallen, undeserving man, esteem

“ the gift of God, which is eternal life,” unworthy of a day appointed to receive it? It is not enough to hold you excused, that you may consider the sabbath obligation to be not sufficiently revealed: it is the sign of a backslider to appeal to revelation for the excuse of his neglect of particular duties. Had, indeed, revelation contained all that some men’s stubborn faith and exorbitant expectation demand, the evangelist’s hyperbole would lose much of its emphasis, when he said, “The world would not contain the books that should be written.” Revelation chiefly confines itself to the discovery of principles; it leaves man to their illustration in practice. But God has other ways of revealing truth to man; to take the sabbath for our instance, is it not clearly revealed as an owned and sanctified means of grace? Has it not been revealed in the conversion of many a sinner in these means? Has it not been often revealed to you, in the mute reproof of conscience on your neglect of these means? and has it not been revealed in the injury done by your ill example on the sabbath? These, my brethren, are revelations distinct as the written word; and for the deaf ear, the blind eye, and misunderstanding heart, which you have

opposed to them, "God will bring you to judgment." "The queen of Sheba shall rise up in the judgment" against this sabbath-breaking generation, and condemn it, for she came from *far* to see the Temple, and hear the wisdom of Solomon;" but many of you, who have the word of God nigh you, come not to the sanctuary, though to hear the wisdom, and feel the spiritual presence, of that greater than Solomon that is here. Turn, then, my brethren, and reflect upon these points again; consider what a sorry answer it would serve you in the day of judgment to avow, "I violated the Lord's-day, because I thought the church appointed it." How much safer to be enabled, by God's grace, to answer, "Lord, I have loved and kept thy sabbath, whether I could satisfy myself they were of thine appointment or not: I felt it was so, and I humbly trusted to keep them holy to thee; thou hast grace to pardon the imperfection of our best services."

2. We learn from our reflections on the principle of a sabbath, how reasonable the service required of us—but one day in seven. Well may the sabbath bell be said to call us "to service," for it is not to *sacrifice*; it is to the service

of our God, and service to ourselves. Our God, to whom belong all our days, has been content to require of us the mere *sevenths* of our existence. But of that even, how much we were unable to render during the unconsciousness of infancy and childhood; and how much has been lost in our days of carelessness, and forgetfulness of God! Brethren, let us now ask ourselves, how much are we in arrears? Have we not a heavy debt upon our consciences? and even on those sabbaths that we have attended the public services, have we not defrauded our Lord of the greater part of the day? Have we not *divided* that day, the whole of which is his, between God and mammon? Could we consider we had done a day's work for a master, according to the flesh, if we had wrought only two hours in the morning, and two in the evening? especially, if even in that brief space we had wrought carelessly, and to no purpose? especially, too, if our benevolent employer, on consideration of our weakness, had required of us to work for him but *one* day, yet nevertheless paid us for the whole week? If *we* thought so, surely the master, on the day of reckoning, would tell us "his thoughts were not as our thoughts;" and shall not

the Lord require his sabbaths at our hands? Brethren, let us look to this; let our future sabbaths be the full sevenths, and whole burnt offerings; neither let there be any half-heartedness in the sacrifice. Let us reflect how small a portion of our time He demands, who might exact the whole; and for whom "eternity's too short to utter all his praise." Let us come to his sanctuary "by the mercies of God, and here present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service." Let us, moreover, always pray for some of the heavenly fire which consumes the incense in the sanctuary, to carry home in our bosom, to light the family altar. Let us keep it burning throughout the week, and let us return, sabbath after sabbath, for more and more of the good fuel; that whenever to our souls the Bridegroom cometh, he may find us with the holy oil in our lamps, ready, and watching, and waiting to go in to the marriage supper of the Lamb!

Lastly. We need scarcely add, that we have every encouragement to a faithful use of the sacred day.

The risen Saviour, whose presence sanctified this day, told his disciples at his last visit, "Lo,

I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The dispensation of his spiritual presence among his people was to be perpetual, and also universal; for "whenever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I, in the midst," said he. But the promise just quoted, was first to the apostles individually. Every man is a little world within himself; every man has his personal dispensation. The promises of God are general, but their fulfilment private and individual. Though his presence be promised to be in the midst of *all* who assemble in his house of prayer, yet the blessing of that presence rests only upon "the sighing of a contrite heart, and the desire of such as be sorrowful;"—sorrowful for sin, if it be the penitent sinner; sorrowful for "the many things in which we offend all," if it be the humble saint. "I am born for repentance," said one of the early Fathers: but there is a birth that needeth not to be repented of; a birth, at which angels joy, that a spirit-child is born for the world to come;—a birth that has no death to it; for, like Him who went before us, "that holy thing that is born shall be called the Son of God;"—a birth, whose Father is the Lord our God. But though he be

the Father of the spirits of all men, his Holy Spirit must be your personal, individual Father, ere ye can be born again, not, as at first, for time, but for eternity; not, as at first, to die, but to live for ever; not, as at first, of the will of man, but of the power of God; not, as at first, unto sin, but unto righteousness; not, as at first, a born captive unto Satan, but a son and freedman of the Lord our Saviour! Brethren, it was for this Christ died for us: but for his death, there had been for us no such birth; but for his death, there had been no such life. Every sabbath that involves the remembrance of that death, in its glorious resurrection, reminds us, we, too, must rise from the dead; but whether to die again the second death, or to live the other life eternal, depends upon our life and dying here. I reminded you, in a former discourse, there was no refuge from the second death hereafter, but by the second—the new birth here. We might add, that this is the case because the new birth unto righteousness involves the death unto sin; thus, then, there is a second death this side eternity, and this is secured in being born again, and living, as the apostle said, “yet not I, but Christ liveth in me (as

the Father in the Son); and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Every sabbath virtually asks us, Would we live such a life? Shall we be born of such a birth? Shall the Saviour, in any one of us, "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied?" God speaks to all of us, but to each individually. You may come here together, but you will be judged alone: you may live with the multitude, but you will die singly: "two men shall be in the field together, the one shall be taken, the other left;" two men were on Mount Calvary together, the one was taken, and the other left. Yet who was to blame? Surely not Him upon the middle cross; for either hand of a crucified Saviour was equally extended to them both; the arms of dying love were open equally wide to all that passed by; yet but one sinner gave glory to God upon the Mount that witnessed the salvation of a world! Oh, that there may be another one to-night! still is the Saviour ready, spiritually, to repeat it. "To-day," poor penitent evil-doer—"to-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise;" to-day, thou shalt



have thy conversation in heaven; to-day, shalt thou sit down in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; to-day, shalt thou come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem; to-day, if thou wilt hear his voice, harden not your hearts, tempt him no longer, for, like his mercy, so his wrath endureth for ever; to-day, while it is called to-day—it may be called eternity to-morrow—turn and embrace the offered love of Jesus: and then to-day shall the sabbath, the type of heaven, seem like a little heaven below; be in some sort heaven itself; for God is here, and his presence is heaven; and he will make these sabbath-houses his heavenly places, and the day of holy rest and worship a Paradise of the sanctified soul!

Oh! that many an one now among us may have full occasion, both in time and in eternity, to feel—“ I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.”

## SERMON III.

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### PROPRIETY OF THE DAY OF RESURRECTION FOR THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

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1 COR. XV. 17.

*“ If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.”*

WE approach the subject of the sabbath to-night, as a day of commemoration, under circumstances of universal interest to us all; an interest derived from its connexion with the doctrine of the Resurrection. If we had to dwell upon its connexion with the means of the conversion of sinners, those who were already converted would acquiesce in this point of its usefulness, but much of its interest would be lost upon them: and if, on the other hand, we dwelt upon its connexion with the means of receiving God's promises to believers, the careless and unmindful would turn a listless ear to such a peculiarity. But when we view the sabbath in its reference to an

event in which we are all equally concerned; when we view the sabbath as a type and pledge of a resurrection which we must all undergo—“ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;”—then the subject aggravates its own importance, and invests itself with an halo of fearful interest to every living soul. The christian sabbath is a sign, a pledge, a proof, a promise, of the resurrection.

In our last discourse, we endeavoured to prove that the original sanction and divine authority of a sabbath was confirmed in the gospel, upon the first, instead of the seventh day of the week; we proceed, this evening, to exhibit to you the reasonableness of selecting the day of our Lord's resurrection for the christian sabbath, rather than any other event of the incarnation, as it appears to form a necessary episode in our series. We shall notice why it was a more fitting day for a sabbath than our Lord's nativity, or the day of his crucifixion, or the day of his ascension. All these events have, as it is meet, their proper seasons of devout and thankful

remembrance; but we shall inquire why the resurrection called for more especial and constant memorial. We shall attempt this task, by exhibiting to your notice a variety of considerations, which may serve to illustrate the infinite importance and necessity of the doctrine of the Lord's resurrection, to the very existence of Christianity;—that no other event in our Lord's life had been of any interest to us, but for the resurrection;—that this truth fixed the sabbath memorial upon the first day of the week. We shall, first, touch briefly upon the evidence of the fact of the resurrection; secondly, elucidate the various points that discover its necessity to the whole scheme of Christianity; and, finally, observe upon that sublime association of ideas which the christian sabbath is intended and calculated to inspire. And may He, whose gracious visits made a sabbath of the resurrection-day, vouchsafe His spiritual presence with us now, while, in humble yet expecting trust upon His blessing, we investigate “the truth as it is in Jesus!”

I. *We briefly touch upon the evidence of the fact of the resurrection.* The credibility of this evidence rests directly upon the credit of the

apostles ; inferentially, upon the necessity of the case, which forms our second inquiry.

We assume that Jesus lived and died, (facts which even the annals of infidelity never found but one man, and he a modern, seriously to question,) and we shall be content with arguing the fact of the resurrection from the story of the evangelists, and the character of the apostles.

It is evident they themselves did neither expect this resurrection, or believe it at its first announcement ; “for as yet they knew not the Scriptures,” says St. John, “that he must rise again from the dead.”

Nothing can be more natural and unaffected than the representation of the progress of conviction in the disciples’ minds. We behold them, in the evangelists’ account, a lonely and disconsolate assembly, brooding over the unexpected and inexplicable death of their Lord and Leader, whom, in their own artless language, “they trusted had been he which should have redeemed Israel.” In common with the rest of their countrymen, they had looked for, in the Messiah, a temporal prince, and had the two sons of Zebedee conceived that their Master’s kingdom was to begin on Calvary, they would not have

asked for their places there—"the one on his right hand, the other on his left." This error was the source of all the failings they record of themselves; an error under which they laboured, even up to the moment of our Lord's ascension, for even then they asked him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" On the day alluded to, we find them met in mutual sorrow, and the sympathy of silence. All the miracles they had seen, all the wisdom they had heard, all the promises they had received, and all the glowing anticipation they had indulged, seemed frustrated on the cross of Calvary, and buried in the sepulchre of the Arimathean. Suddenly, the Magdalene and her companions bring the news of his resurrection: they never doubted these women before, yet now their tidings are esteemed as idle tales—the mere mockery of hope. The report is confirmed by the disciples from Emmaus, and again corroborated by Peter's attestation of the absence of the body from the sepulchre: but still they doubted.

At length, the Lord himself appeared among them; yet, instead of being convinced, still "they were affrighted, supposing they saw a spirit;" and even when at last he displayed to them his hands

and feet, still overwhelmed with astonishment and delight, in the precisely natural language of St. Luke, “they believed not for joy, and wondered”—in common phrase, “the news appeared too good to be true.” But he assured them by the evidence of all their sense—he ate with them, drank with them, sat with them, conversed with them, and “shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” The apostles, therefore, were not mistaken themselves; and were they likely men to deceive others? They had neither motive or power for the act. No *motive*; inasmuch as they would not have undergone such labours, perils, sufferings, travels, and persecutions, for the sake of a doctrine which they did not sincerely believe: the history of man contains not a single memoir of a martyr for a conscious fraud. Neither had they *power*. The fishermen of Galilee had no more learning than their craft, no more wealth or influence than their nets, when they left them to become “fishers of men;” yet they ventured forth in the face of all the wealthy, the powerful, and the multitude, to preach a *risen* Saviour to them

who had just been his murderers. Above five hundred others attested their Lord's appearance after his passion, and there is not an instance on record of any one who recanted; on the contrary, many of them sealed the truth of the doctrine in their blood. He who can doubt the fact after such a cloud of witnesses, after such moving evidence, is one who would "say in his haste, all men are liars" who depose a single incident which his senses had not experienced.

In this state of being, man's sphere of observation is so contracted, that we are necessarily obliged to act and speak constantly upon the credit of external evidence. Character in testimony always commands its share of influence. All the value of history is founded upon that principle of our nature, which inclines us to believe whatever is not presently and directly opposed to the conviction of our senses; but the philosophy of human faith demands for extraordinary propositions extraordinary evidence. Such evidence was furnished by the apostles, when they proposed to man the question, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" True, such an event is necessarily uncommon: before our Lord, it



had happened but twice in the history of the world. Deity—let us speak it with reverence—is economical of miracles; because, if they were frequent, that which constitutes their usefulness, as such, would cease; because, it seems inconsistent with the order of his own providence that they should be more frequent than an adequate cause for their interposition demands; because, if Providence had not reserved his miracles for particular occasions, there had been no means of particular appeal to his intelligent creatures.

But to believe a miracle, we require, as we said, all but miraculous evidence; and surely such evidence the martyr-witnesses of Jesus deposed before the world, in the wonderful success of the doctrines they taught, and for which “they gladly suffered the loss of all things.” The testimony satisfied vast numbers of their cotemporaries; the record of that testimony in the written word, and in the succession of living believers, satisfies us. If history possessed not such influence and authority, *i. e.* if man were not naturally inclined to a wholesome credulity, what an impediment would the contrary be to the advance of human intellect and morality. How few of the sublimest discoveries in art and

science had been available, for none would have began where their predecessors left off; but every succeeding generation would be groping its uncertain way to the truth, without that social light and assistance, which Providence, in furnishing us with the means of communicating our ideas, intended us to afford each other. But the carnal mind is rarely sceptical touching the traditions of its fellow-mind; it rarely doubts any evidence, except that which is connected with Divine revelation. Where, then, is the secret spring of infidelity? Surely not any flaw in the evidence it scrutinizes, but in the partial, biassed, flesh-bribed heart that trembles at its truth. We cannot, however, dwell longer upon the fact. We proceed to investigate—

II. *The necessity of the doctrine to the whole scheme of Christianity, as asserted in the text.* “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain;” and mark how awfully it concerns us all, “ye are yet in your sins.” This resurrection, then, is the key-stone of the gospel arch; the Cephaz, upon which the christian church is built and supported; the crowning point and conclusion of the incarnation, and, therefore, the fittest and

most worthy of signal, chief, and peculiar commemoration.

It may be profitable to elucidate this necessity and importance in some of its more prominent points of view.

1. *We notice the necessity of the resurrection to the doctrine of the atonement.*

“Who is he that condemneth?” asked the apostle: “it is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” In this passage, the necessity and paramount importance of the resurrection to the fulfilment of the object of the atonement, is clearly and fully asserted. The doctrine of a *crucified* Saviour is plainly incomplete and nugatory without the doctrine of a *risen* Saviour. What matter that the sacrifice were slain, unless it were also offered? What profit that it be offered, unless it were accepted? The great sacrifice of the Jews was accepted, by the fire from heaven coming down upon the altar to carry it in its chariot of flame above: the slain Lamb of God was raised from the altar of death, and the sacrifice accepted in his ascension into glory. Thus, then, the passion on the cross was the offering; the

resurrection from the grave, God's acceptance of it. But the doctrine proves more than this: Christ's resurrection was not, like the raising of Lazarus, effectuated by the visible agency of Deity in the person of another party; but Jesus *himself* rose, in the *same* body in which others had borne him dead to the sepulchre. Of all the rest he had performed, this was the miracle among miracles. If, therefore, it were so necessary as the text asserts, to the doctrine of the atonement, and this doctrine be so essential and fundamental a part of Christianity, that the same apostle "determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" then the doctrine of the resurrection is essentially necessary to the whole fabric of Christianity. Could the resurrection of a mere *martyred* "teacher sent from God" be so essential to the vital interests of Christianity? Was any such necessity predicated of Moses or Elias? Had the apparition of Samuel any such effect upon the Jewish polity? But Christ appeared again in the body. A mere man could not so raise himself; but Christ had distinctly promised to do it himself: God would not work a miracle to countenance a fraud. If, therefore,

Christ arose, the fact of the resurrection proves his divinity. Hence, then, the necessity of the act to substantiate the Saviour's claims to equality in the Godhead; hence, the unspeakable glory, the great mystery of godliness, in the redemption that is by Christ Jesus. "God was in Christ, ('the Almighty's fellow,') reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

We cannot enlarge upon this important feature in the doctrine of the resurrection; there are other points which invite our attention. We notice,

2. *The necessity of the resurrection in order to undeceive the errors of the apostles.* We have already alluded to their ignorance of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. They perceived no connexion between his previous trials, labours, precepts, miracles, prophecies, and promises, and his subsequent condemnation and shameful death. They knew not that "he must suffer these things, and then to enter into his glory." They beheld the whole as an inscrutable calamity, and fled. Evidently, then, to have left them in this darkness, when they alone, of all the world, were the depositaries of

any knowledge of Christ at all, would have nipped Christianity in the bud, and stopped the gracious fountain at its source. But when he unexpectedly arose, he fully proved his passion was voluntary—was, therefore, directed to some end. Now every doubt vanishes; now every mystery is explained; “their eyes were opened, and they understood the Scriptures.” They could now preach, that “without blood there is no remission of sins;” and yet point to that great High Priest, “who needeth not daily, as those high priests (of the temple), to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s; for this he did once, when he offered up himself:” and the sanction of the doctrine rests upon the fact, that Christ “is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” But the apostles were not the only persons to be undeceived; we notice,

*3. The resurrection was necessary to silence unbelief, and confound the Saviour’s persecutors.*

When the priests and people had succeeded in procuring his death, they vainly flattered

themselves his doctrines and his name were alike silenced in the tomb. For a brief space (how emblematic of the prosperity of the wicked), three short days only, infidelity triumphed, and the enemies of truth congratulated each other; but on the third day, when the sign of Jonas and of the temple was fulfilled, when the Lord was "perfected," though the watchmen of his enemies beleaguered his resting-place, he arose like a giant refreshed with sleep, and before, even in a natural process, the decomposition of his body had commenced, the Holy One, who was not to be left in hell, nor to see corruption, shook off, like the Nazarite, "the green withes and cords" of the grave, carried away the gates of death, and appeared among his troubled and abashed adversaries, as the Lord, mighty to save!

The pitiful subterfuge of the Sanhedrim (a subterfuge they were ashamed ever to repeat), to disprove his resurrection, is the strongest proof of the fact, which the extremity of embarrassed malice could betray. If he had not risen, how painfully different had been the issue! The bitter taunt of the degenerate priests had been true to the letter: "He saved others,

himself he cannot save." If he had not risen, what answer could be given to the refusal, when they tempted him with the plea, "Let him come down from the cross, and then we will believe him."

Oh the matchless subtlety and delusion of the tempter in that awful moment! It was not enough he had in his own person probed him during the pangs of hunger, with the bait, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread;" he now must tempt him by the agency of others with another *if*: "If thou be the Christ, come down from the cross." Full well the serpent felt his head was being bruised; full well he knew, that if the Christ *had* come down from the cross, the atonement had not been consummated; he, the evil one, had still possessed the sword of the destroying angel, for the door-posts of the house of Adam had never been sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. But further, these very priests in some sort suspected there would be a resurrection. "Destroy this temple," said our Lord, "and in three days I will raise it up," though, at the time they were uttered, the Jews maliciously construed these



expressions as referring to their material temple, yet their duplicity and stubbornness is evident in their quoting the same words to Pilate, to induce him to grant them a guard to watch the sepulchre. "That deceiver said, while he was yet alive," said they, "after three days I will rise again." It was necessary he should rise to assure them he was no deceiver, but the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It was what no man had ever promised to do; what no man had ever done, or pretended to do; and, therefore, was what well became Him, who did such deeds, as even his enemies had confessed "no man could do, unless God were with him!"

We have alluded to a point on which we notice more particularly,

4. *The resurrection was necessary to the Saviour's triumph over "death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."*

The crucifixion had ruined Christianity, but for the resurrection that explained and proved it. The Jew and the Pagan had been as right as we are; the former more so. The Jew had justly put to death the man that "made himself the Son of God;" the Pagan had justly said, as of old, "These Christians adore a man who was

put to death in Judea." Had Jesus remained in the grave longer than he had promised, his holy name had been at least coupled with error and mutability; had he not risen at all, the imputation of imposture had been one solution of the difficulty, or his persevering adherents must have believed that the powers of heaven were unequal in the contest with the powers of hell—that Satan had triumphed over the Rock of ages. But, on the contrary, when at his own appointed time he arose, he strictly fulfilled the Messiah's high engagements. He discovered why he submitted to die—why he sought to meet, and grapple with death—that he might vanquish the monster in his own cave; that he might rescue the precious spoils, an universe of souls, "from him that had the power of death;" and that the Seed of the woman might inflict the long-aimed, long-promised bruise upon the serpent's head, and hell, with all her trembling principalities and powers, might never recover His immortal blow, who "ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." "Then was brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Before the resurrection, man saw nothing before him but death and darkness; after it, he had a well-founded hope of eternal life. Whence we observe,

5. *The resurrection was necessary to sanction the doctrine of a future existence.*

All the lessons of our blessed Lord were practically taught; he taught the lesson of the resurrection from the dead in the same manner. He rose to teach the doctrine of eternity, to tell the story of another life, to lead the way through the valley of death, into the land of immortal spirits.

The views of the Jewish people generally, and doubtless of the apostles also, upon this important doctrine, were dark, vague, and unsatisfactory; not to mention the considerable sect of the Sadducees, who believed in no resurrection, neither angel or spirit: among the Gentiles, also, were similar dogmatists. The metempsychosis of Pythagoras, and the doctrines of Epicurus, had numberless disciples among the Greeks, and

among the Romans, who had then overran the world. Touching the soul's chief attribute and dignity, her essential immortality, "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people." But "life and immortality were brought to light" by the resurrection and revelations of Jesus, in a manner hitherto unparalleled in the history of man. It need hardly be observed, that since all the sanctions of religion and morality are founded upon their reference to another state of existence, "if in this life only we have hope," says the apostle, "we are of all men most miserable." Surely, then, the proof and enforcement of the doctrine of this future life is of the first importance to every other doctrine of religion; whence then the doctrine Christ had so unequivocally asserted in his life, he proved, beyond all doubt or controversy, after his death: he rose not only as "the first-fruits of them that slept," but also as the earnest of all them, in whom dwells "the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead," who "shall also quicken their mortal bodies by his Spirit, that dwelleth in them." Whose peculiar office leads us to notice,

*Lastly. The necessity of the resurrection to the succeeding mission of the Holy Ghost.*

“It is expedient for you that I go away,” said our Lord to his disciples; “for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” He could not have sent them the Holy Spirit from the grave; he must send him from the heaven,—his dwelling-place,—and for the purpose, ascend thither himself. He promised, and he must perform; but ten days after his ascension into glory, he sent his Holy Spirit down, to be present “with us alway, even unto the end of the world.” Be it further and especially remembered, that man depends primarily, constantly, and exclusively upon the grace of this Holy Spirit to bring, and guide, and keep him in the way of life; if, therefore, the resurrection were necessary to the acquisition of this blessed Spirit, the doctrine is necessary to salvation,—necessary, as we observed upon our first point, to the whole scheme of Christianity. By the resurrection only, “the stone which the builders rejected became the head-stone of the corner;” without it we should preach a faith in the dead, incite you to worship a mortal and a creature: for that which could be ended, was somewhen begun, and therefore somewhen created. But on the

contrary, when we praise a risen Saviour, adore a living God, and celebrate an ascended Redeemer, we have a worship without idolatry, a creed without superstition, a love without absurdity, "a hope that maketh not ashamed."

We trust, then, you are now prepared to acknowledge what a sublime association of ideas a fit and reflective observance of the christian sabbath is calculated to excite in the believer's mind. To-day, as we have seen, the offered sacrifice was accepted for us, and the atonement fully consummated; to-day, the melancholy delusion of the bewildered apostles of our church was wholly dissipated, their hearts gladdened, and their eyes opened; to-day, the triumph of unbelievers was cut short, and the joy of the unholy turned into mourning; to-day, the powers of the evil one received the long-predicted, and subduing blow; to-day, the gloomy darkness of the future was scattered by the rising of the Sun of Righteousness upon the tomb; and to-day, the Holy Ghost came down from heaven, because the Son of God "ascended up to where he was before," and sent him "for us men, and for our salvation."

Is there any other event throughout the

sacred life of the Redeemer involving such momentous consequences as this? Can there be any other day more worthy and more suited to the solemnities of a sabbath? Then, was the *nativity* a better day? No; though the first Christmas holiday was kept by the heathen Magi, a sabbath of gifts and worship. Was the *crucifixion* a better day? No; though the first Good Friday was kept by the conscious sun, a sabbath of rest from shining. Was the *ascension* a better day? No; for then the Lord himself kept sabbath with his holy angels in the heaven of heavens. But the *resurrection* brought Jesus to the earth again, to make a sabbath for man, giving him a pledge and type of another life; and as the old sabbath was a sign of deliverance from bondage, so the new and better day became the sign of a greater deliverance, which "shall be to us, and to all that love his appearing" on the resurrection morning of the latter day. Then welcome, blessed sabbath of our Lord; welcome every glad return of the sweet holiday! Be thou ever welcome to all thy Lord's happy people, even as the Lord himself, that made thee, was welcome home again to his holy angels!

In conclusion, what practical use can we make of our reflections? Has it done one of us any good? Has it provoked a single pious vow; or given birth to one devout wish, ejaculated in the heart's prayer to God, for more grace to solemnize this blessed day more profitably to ourselves, more conformably with its sacred associations, more exclusively to the glory of God? If it has had this effect, we may feel with Peter, "It is good to be here;" our souls have realized, in this day's spiritual associations, more than the transfiguration on the Mount—the return of Jesus into Deity, without the relapse again into manhood; the proofs and pledges of redemption by Jesus of Nazareth, without fear of the perplexity and doubt of another Calvary. Calvary itself is full of glory, and lovely to the soul which there sees her salvation. "It is good to be here," for "God is here," though many of us, like Jacob in his sleep, "knew it not." God is here: for he has promised, and "is not man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent." God is here: "How dreadful is this place," felt the patriarch; "this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" Why,



then, dreadful! Because, my brethren, from the very gate of heaven there is a road to hell. Some are bidden to "enter," others "to depart;" many are called, but few are chosen; all are welcomed, but how few comply with the terms!

But we have a lesson or two suggested to us by our reflections.

1. *As this day's sabbath is a memorial of such great and important events, what a sign of hardness of heart and stubbornness of unbelief they exhibit, who pass over the day in carelessness and neglect of its duties!* Has not God done enough on this day to commend its solemnity to your souls? "O yes!" you may be ready to answer, "we believe it all!" My brethren, you were not charged with unbelief in theory; it is to the practical Sadducee, to the *life and walk* infidel, the Holy Ghost appeals, when he asks you, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord! and do not the things which I say?" Oh, that such lip-worshippers would remember, that the day cometh when they shall again say, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" and say it in vain.

It is hard to say which is the greater foe to

Jesus; he who denies, and therefore cries—“Away with him!” or he who believes, yet whose double-minded, hypocritical, “Hail, Master!” betray him to the scorn and assaults of the unbelieving. The latter, perhaps, are the more dangerous and destructive in the end. The false professor, Judas, did more injury, and, therefore, was a greater enemy to the Saviour, than all the priests, and elders, and people. The traitor who bares the bosom is more guilty than the stranger who strikes the blow. The worldly Christian,—to use such a contradiction of terms, but there is many such a moral paradox,—the God and Mammon worshipper, knows not what cruel injury he does to the truth, what offence to weak brethren, what stumbling in the way of returning sinners, what occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme; and never is indecision of character, or inconsistency of life and conversation, so prominent and apparent to the world as on the Lord’s-day. The world remarks these things more than christian professors imagine, because upon these points they can enlarge and murmur, though the uprightness of the faithful be passed over in, at least, the respect of silence. For

the sake of our brethren, therefore, as for our own sakes also, let us watchfully and prayerfully endeavour "to give no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed," that your profession be not questioned, or your falling become the stumbling-block in a neighbour's way.

*But further, what shall be said of those who neglect the sabbath ordinance altogether?* The resurrection sabbath is no charm or hope to them. The risen Saviour is to them a risen judge; and the blood that might have been the blood of ransom, rises indeed, but, like the blood of the first victim, crieth up to Heaven against them. They have crucified the Lord afresh—they have morally invoked "his blood upon them and on their children," and they have denied the Lord that bought them. What then? Perchance God hath said, for awhile "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone;" and hath declared, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." But a little while, poor workers of iniquity! life is short, is always passing away, its tenure most frail and uncertain. There is nothing sure from the beginning except its end; life has no certainty except its death;

we may reckon on no more. A little while, then, and a Lord's-day cometh that ye must keep—the day for which all other days were made;—the day that will be the death and last of days;—the day whose morning and whose evening eternity shall not sever;—the day whose everlasting light shall shine upon the redeemed, and whose everlasting dark shall fall upon the damned;—the day of final and eternal destinies, “the great and terrible day of the Lord,” when he cometh in the clouds of heaven! Who can write, or speak, or hear, or think of these awful truths, and not tremble that he has a soul,—a soul whose resurrection on that day must begin its own endless sabbath in heaven, or its endless torment in hell; a soul that, in a certain sense, is now in his own hands, but then will be no longer his own; a soul whose every motion certifies her essential immortality; a soul which he alone knows the value of, who paid the price; yet a soul which many a fallen spirit will weep and bewail that it was ever its possession. Every soul of man forms a spiritual possession. We are all morally possessed of a good or evil spirit. In our origin with an unclean spirit, and in our progress without “the creation of a clean heart,

and the renewal of a right spirit," we shall be in our end possessed of a *fallen* spirit, and that eternally. Now, then, while there is time, and while there is time there is hope,—now, for there is no promise of the great I Am, except upon the *present*, though that present in relation to both grace for the future, and pardon for the past,—now, "let us seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near," nor ever rest till this moral evil, this strong one that possesses our nature, be overcome by "the stronger than he that cometh;" and instead of Satan in the old Adam, the second Adam in Christ, be formed in us, "the hope of glory."

*Lastly. Our reflections on our Lord's resurrection furnish matter of comfort to the believer in Christ.* Trials and afflictive dispensations he knows but work together for good, because his Saviour endured them before him. He learns "in patience to possess his soul," no matter how dark and mysterious the visitation: the apostles thought all was over in their Master's death, but the day of resurrection was but three days off, and the believer's consolation may be likewise drawing nigh. It was but for "*a little while,*"

the Saviour said, "ye shall not see me;" the believer waits another "little while," and he shall see him, because his Lord goes to the Father. He is comforted by the promise of the Comforter; and though it be sometimes, in a scornful world like this, his lot to fall in with the crucifiers of his Lord, and like Simon of Cyrene, "him they compel to bear his cross," yet he finds his Saviour *beside* him; and amid all the scoffs of infidelity, and the taunts of carnal enmity, he beholds, with the uplifted eye of faith, "the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God;" "yea, though he walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he will fear no evil," for he finds the footsteps of his Jesus in the grave, and follows him beyond to glory! The world may lay his body in the tomb; the world may come and see the place where the believer lay; but the Angel of the Covenant has an answer for them there, like that which met the mourners at the sepulchre—"He is not here; he is risen!" God grant to each of us an equal epitaph, for his sake who hath gone before us! We know not how soon we may want it. One who was as well esteemed as he was well-known among

you, kept his last sabbath in this earthly tabernacle; he has kept to-day's sabbath in that "other house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Oh, let each one pray, "May I die the death of the righteous, and my last end be like his!"

## SERMON IV.

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### THE SABBATH CONSIDERED AS A DAY OF REST.

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NEHEMIAH XIII. 17, 18.

*“ Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath-day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.”*

AMONG the various evils that called for the attention and redress of the great Jewish reformers, Nehemiah had to inveigh bitterly against the public abuse of the sabbath. On examination of the context, we find the causes of this abuse to be traced to the connivance of the rulers of the people, in regard of matters of merchandize being permitted sale on this holy day. “ In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also, wine, grapes, and figs,



and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath-day; and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals." If we changed the names of some of the articles, have we not great cause to testify against the too general spread of the same evil among ourselves? There is great laxity of practice on this head, part of which has unhappily received the sanction of legal permission, and of public patronage; we allude to the sale of some articles, as of some kinds of fish, which, because of their rapid perishableness, have obtained a kind of prescriptive right of sale on the sabbath. If there were any doubt of the moral unlawfulness of these sales on the sabbath, on the score of the general rule of necessary acts, (though that provision which only ministers to luxury can never be proved to be NECESSARY food,) if, I say, there be two opinions on the question, considered generally, the matter is set at rest by the next verse preceding our text,—“There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, who brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem;” then, says Nehemiah, in the words of our text, “I contended with the nobles of Judah, and

said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath-day?" These acts were, at that time, considered to be violations of the moral law of the sabbath; that law is unaltered, is the same now as it was then; such acts are therefore now an evident violation of the same institution. True, there were among the Jews certain points of mere ceremonial violation of the sabbath, which are not now to be considered violations; but unnecessary secular employment on the holy day, is not a matter of ceremonial, but of moral wrong. If the nobles alluded to in our text, and the wealthy, had not connived at the evil by patronizing the market of these luxuries, the poor salesmen had not been tempted to profane the sabbath. The same argument belongs to ourselves. Alas! was it long ago that a British Nehemiah appealed to our rulers and nobles, on precisely the same national grievance and iniquity; and was the appeal met with that serious attention and respect which became the senate of a christian land?

Great men are the fuglemen of a community; man is an imitative being, and his bias is, from childhood to old age, to mimic his superiors, whether of age or station. The eminently good

man, or the conspicuously bad, are both sure of a multitude of copiers, and hence the greater sin measured by its greater mischief, of an evil example in the titled and the opulent members of society. Doubtless the Providence that set any man upon a hill, will call into judgment the effect of his influence upon his brethren in the valley. No man commits the sin of an ill example unconsciously, for man is a social being, influencing, and being influenced, by the society into which he falls ; and he knows this influence, for man is a vain being, and proudly alive to the sense of his every real or imagined attribute. Conscious shame may wear the mask of modesty, in declaring her ignorance of the extent of her evil influence ; but this ignorance, if it were real, is wilfully culpable ; if assumed, is still more reprehensible. The gradations of this influence pass through all the classes of society, from the crowned father of his people, to the peasant father of his fireside. In the present day, by reason of the numerous intersections of power which commerce and property have made in the community, the middling classes form an immense Sanhedrim and college of moral rulers of the people, whose influence is immediate and

commanding; every master tradesman is a sort of feudal lord, to whom the little retinue of his artisans, more or less, pay the unconscious tribute of following his influence and copying his example. It is, therefore, of such infinite importance to the poor journeyman, that the master be a servant of God; it is, therefore, that masters have no right to such indulgences which endanger in their imitation the morals of their dependants. Particularly in all public efforts to promote the cause of religion, acts of public inconsistency on the part of the influential orders of society should be especially avoided. If, for instance, a laudable exertion has been made by the magistracy, seconded, as they ever should be, by the clergy and the religious profession generally, to secure the better observance of the sabbath-day,—how, I would ask, can the gentry of a neighbourhood expect the labouring classes to refrain from violating the Lord's-day in taverns and amusement, when they see their superiors setting them the example in news-rooms and convivial visitings? The landlord murmurs to be obliged to close his inn when the door of the library, or the promenade, is at the same time open. Such public countenance and patronage

of sabbath-breaking must be the effect of inadvertency, or of wilful preference to a newspaper over the book of Common Prayer. If it be the former case, it is the duty of christian ministers faithfully to point out the perilous and unhappy error; if it be the latter, it is still their duty to lift up their voices against sin in any shape, and under any circumstances, for nothing can hide or diminish aught of its exceeding sinfulness; the practice of very angels could not hold it unrebukable or unpunished. Wickedness is not to rest uncensured because it sits upon high places; no matter that we incur the sneer of the scornful, or the malediction of the profane, or the murmur of the half-hearted professor. If vice were to pass untaxed, and without reproof, lest men should be offended, the stumbling-block of the cross had never been "set for the fall and rising again of many in the spiritual Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against." It is a melancholy proof of the unchanged character of the world, that the truth is still an offence, still an unpalatable presentment, still an unwelcome stranger; but through good report or evil report, it must prevail, if only on the principle of endurance; for it will live when all its enemies are dead.

The duty of the influential part of the public in promoting the observance of the Lord's-day, will probably appear more plainly evident in our following reflections. Previously, however, let us briefly glance at a question which has been recently the subject of considerable agitation, viz., the right of the legislature to enforce, as much as human law can do, an external decency in the observance of the sabbath-day. This may be briefly stated upon two principles.

1. It is a christian land; her senate, therefore, has a right to defend from public violation a christian institution, such institutions being part and parcel of the national polity, the guardianship of which is the peculiar province of the legislature. It is no less the law of England, than the law of Heaven, that six days' labour should be followed by a seventh day's rest, and as we shall presently see, this is none other than a law of the necessities of nature also. Then the senate, in enforcing that external observance of the sabbath which consists in the exemption of all classes from labour, does not exceed its prerogative, but consults the common good, not only in a constitutional, but

also in a moral, and as we shall presently see, in a physical, point of view.

2. The senate has a right to make such provision, that the worship of our common God be not attended with injury and loss to the devout members of the community. In other words, the senate is right in removing from vice all the public sanction and patronage within the scope of the just liberty of the subject. This liberty becomes licentiousness one single step beyond the law of God; this law has enjoined the observance of the sabbath; its public violation, therefore, becomes a proper subject of public condemnation. The public voice is the law of the land; justly then, the law inflicts a penalty upon the open violation of the national sabbath. If it were not so, what grievous injury would befall the conscientious observer of the day of rest, if his ungodly neighbours were thus suffered to monopolize from the religious one day in every seven for the unopposed sale of their merchandize!

There is, notwithstanding the statutes against it, and the exertions of the magistracy, too much of this evil in every neighbourhood in the realm; and it is not too much to affirm, that the sabbath-

selling tradesman takes an unfair advantage of his more conscientious neighbour. Then a christian senate cannot too much discountenance public vice, nor afford too many facilities to the progress of public morality; neither can any nation consult its own political health and stability, so much as by promoting its public obedience, not so much to its own laws immediately, as to the laws of God. "Righteousness exalteth a nation," said the wisest legislator and philosopher of antiquity, "but sin is a reproach to any people." Who can quote me a single law of God, the general obedience of which would not directly consult the common good, and that, too, without any injury to the individual, which is not the case in all public benefactions? But in this, "happy are the people in such a case, yea, happy are the people whose God is the Lord. Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Jehovah's laws were founded upon that intimate acquaintance with the universal wants and peculiarities of his creatures, which no human legislator, however highly gifted, could ever emulate or pretend; all the laws of nature suggest the wisdom and benevo-



lence of the Deity ; all the laws of Providence, to those who by obedience best know them, speak the same truth ; all the laws of grace, in all their blessed influences upon their faithful subjects' hearts ; all that we see, or know, or feel, or believe, of the Supreme Being, unanimously confirm the character that " God is love," " yea, he is altogether lovely."

Let us attempt an illustration of this general feature of wisdom and benevolence towards man, in the commandments of God, which suggests itself in the subject of this evening's inquiry, *i. e.* The sabbath considered as a day of rest. We propose to exhibit to your notice,

I. Man's necessity for a day of rest, touching his animal economy.

II. The extent of the injunction contained in the law of rest.

III. Man's necessity for that injunction, touching his moral economy.

And may that Holy Spirit, that rested on his own sabbath in heaven, graciously condescend to rest upon us here, while in humble dependence on his promised aid, we wrestle with the Angel of the Covenant for the blessing of truth !

I. *Man's necessity for a day of rest, touching his animal economy.* On this head, I need do no more than quote the evidence of an eminent physician, recently addressed to a parliamentary committee on the subject. Remember, my brethren, this is not the testimony of a priest, which many of us are too apt to suspect as interested, (as if all, or any of us, were not as much interested in matters belonging to death and judgment, heaven and hell, as any priest in Christendom.) If there be any such inconsiderate persons here, I would call their serious attention to the enlightened evidence of a man of science. In reference to the sabbath, he observes, "As a day of rest, I view it as a day of compensation for the inadequate restorative power of the body, under continued labour and excitement. A physician always has respect to the preservation of the restorative power, because if once this be lost, his healing office is at an end. If I show you, from the physiological view of the question, that there are provisions in the laws of nature which correspond with the Divine commandment, you will see from the analogy that 'the sabbath was made for man,' as a *necessary* appointment. A

physician is anxious to preserve the balance of circulation, as necessary to the restorative power of the body. The ordinary exertions of man run down the circulation every day of his life; and the first general law of nature by which God (who is not only the giver, but also the preserver and sustainer of life,) prevents man from destroying himself, is the alternating of day with night, that repose may succeed action. But although the night apparently equalizes the circulation well, yet it does not sufficiently restore its balance for the attainment of a long life. Hence, one day in seven, by the bounty of Providence, is thrown in as a day of compensation, to perfect by its repose the animal system. You may easily determine this question as a matter of fact, by trying it on beasts of burden. Take that fine animal, the horse, and work him to the full extent of his powers every day of the week, or give him rest one day in seven, and you will soon perceive, by the superior vigour with which he performs his functions on the other six days, that this rest is necessary to his well-being." The Doctor's experiment was tried in that French revolution, when, among other evidences of that wisdom of man which is

“ foolishness in the sight of God,” the national sabbath was formally abolished, and the great consequent mortality among the cattle admonished that profligate period, that the servant and the cattle gave the argument of martyrdom in favour of the seventh day’s rest. “ But,” continues the Doctor, “ man, possessing a superior nature, is borne along by the very vigour of his mind, so that the injury of continued diurnal exertion and excitement on his animal system, is not so immediately apparent as it is in the brute, but, in the long run, (the sabbath-breaker) breaks down suddenly ; it abridges the length of his life, and the vigour of his old age, which (as to mere animal power) ought to be the object of his preservation.” After other admirable remarks, our author concludes, “ that researches in physiology, by the analogy of the working of providence in nature, will establish the truth of revelation, and, consequently, show that the Divine commandment is to be considered an appointment *necessary* to man.”

We need no further comment upon the passage we have quoted, than merely to remind you, my brethren, that to “ remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy,” is not the “ foolishness

of preaching," as it may be deemed, but the true "wisdom of the wise." We proceed, after the proof of the necessity of rest, to inquire,

II. *Into the extent of the injunction contained in the law that commands this rest.*" We find this extent equal to the above proved necessity, and doubtless founded upon the fact. Does the master alone require the day of compensation for the waste of animal vigour? surely his labourers and his cattle require it more. Thus then, the Providence, whose tender mercy is over all his works, includes, in the equal law with the master, his "son and daughter, man and maid-servant, stranger and cattle," and all to be allowed "no manner of work." Where is here room for equivocation, or saving clause? The perfection of a statute consists in its so comprehensive letter, that no sleight, quibble or evasion can violate with impunity the spirit of its injunction. Where is statute or subtle enactment so brief, so plain, and yet so inevitable, as this? But we may profitably enlarge upon its details. The extent of the injunction touches both the time, and subjects of observance. Of the *time*, the law says, "The seventh day is the sabbath of the

Lord thy God, in it," *i. e.* in this day, "thou shalt do no manner of work." By a day, we understand that portion of time which, in Genesis, is defined to be the morning and evening, which we are wont to constitute of twenty-four hours' duration. The Jews understood the sabbath-day from Friday evening to Saturday evening; but still the same amount of time was devoted, a day of twenty-four hours. During this period, any manner of work is strictly forbidden, except those cases of necessity or charity which will be hereafter defined.

Again, of the *subjects* of observance of the sabbath, the law says, first to the individual, "Thou shalt do no manner of work;" but if that individual be a father, he may think to keep the law himself, by deputing his children to work for him. To prevent this, then, though the subterfuge ought to be disarmed in the fact that the commandment is directed to every individual, touching every manner of work, whether for himself or others, yet God condescends to anticipate this evasion, and to add, "nor thy son, nor thy daughter:" the parental authority is inferior to that of God. Cold-hearted accomplice in thy children's transgres-

sion, thou shalt bear their penalty! He who "visits the sins of the fathers upon the children," will also reverse the judgment, and visit the sins of the children upon the fathers, but in a far more fearful, perchance in an eternal visitation. But some one will say, "If I employ not my children, surely the servants whom I pay for their labour may use their own conscience whether they will work for me on this day." No; the law adds, "nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant." You have no right either to command per force, or accept their services voluntarily; the former makes you an aider and abettor, the latter a receiver of the stolen sabbath. It is the Lord's day; and shouldst thou or thy servant rob him of his holy sabbath, ye are confederates in sacrilege, and both under guilt of the moral felony. But where will the human heart, "so deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," stop? There is another step where the subtlety of the devil leads a man to say, "Well, if I may not employ my children, or my servants, who have souls to be saved, surely I may use my brute cattle, who do not know how to keep a sabbath." No, my brethren; "the merciful man spareth

the life of his beast;" rest is as necessary, nay, more so, to the poor beasts that perish, than to you; God's law has ordained them their share, dare ye, then, to break the commandment, by robbing his dumb creatures? Once more, effectually to cut short all and every evasion, the man may say, "Well, I leave all my family, self, children, servants, and cattle, to keep holy the sabbath, but I cannot control yon stranger that does not belong to me; if he violate the sabbath, it is no matter of mine." But it is thy matter; God has made it so, "if the stranger be within thy gates." We have no right to tolerate impiety of any kind in our own household; the blessing of God is withdrawn from the domestic camp, until the Achan who is in it be put out. The parent is bound to save himself and his children from the temptation of a sabbath-breaker's presence and example.

Nehemiah, in the verse before our text, complains of the Jews' employment of the services of men of Tyre on the sabbath-day. It is somewhat remarkable that Jewish traders, in various towns of this kingdom, are commonly in the habit of having a christian partner in their business,—“a stranger in their gates,”—to violate



their sabbath by a similar evasion. We may presume this office is reciprocated by the Jew on our Sunday, and thus both parties commit the sin by implication, for both allow a stranger to their respective creeds to violate each the other's sabbath-day. Alas, for such grievous obliquity of mind, and disingenuousness of heart! Alas, for "the deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish!" Alas, for the "cunning craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" but, alas, the more for their own delusion, "in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them!"

We have to shew,

III. *Man's necessity of this day of rest, touching his moral economy.* This may be observed under various points of view.

1. A day of rest from secular labour is necessary to give the mind that composure which alone can fit it for spiritual reflection. Though the good man trusts to be enabled, in the "diligence of business," to be "fervent in spirit," in both cases "serving the Lord," yet he feels and knows that in this world's business he wants

seasons of more uninterrupted and entire devotion of spirit to his heavenly Master; his mind is divided; his heart too much occupied with the necessary duties of his calling, to be satisfied with only such a service of God. True, his Lord is welcome to these brief and broken sacrifices of his morning and evening exercises, but he is anxious to bring a full day to his God, a whole burnt-offering to the public altar; he looks, then, to the returning sabbath with delight, and welcomes the sweet dawn of rest and devotion with heart-felt, unaffected pleasure. He thanks God for every beginning day that adds another link to the chain of his existence; but he is more thankful for that day, which comes not so often as he could wish; for that day, which reminds him of the last he looks for; for that day, when he has a purer and a longer conversation with heaven; for that day, when he enjoys a greater communion with the people of God, and lifts up with them the common psalm to heaven, in token and anticipation of that new, yet everlasting song of Moses and the Lamb, which he longs to sing in heaven.

2. A day of rest is necessary to man's moral duty in his social character. The blessed God,

who made man a social and gregarious being, requires at our hands social sacrifices. In this view, the Christian seeks the assembly in the sanctuary, to join his prayer with their prayers, his thanks with their thanks, and his praises with their praises. He feels it to be due to God to make this public acknowledgment of spiritual allegiance to him, as his soul-and-body Lord and King; to shew among men that he is not ashamed to confess the name of his God, or the profession of his people. His language is, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." But it is evident if there were no appointed day when men should unanimously cease from their ordinary and private avocations, and come together into the place of assembly, that there could be no social worship of God at all. One would be scandalized at his devotion by the carnal occupation and hindrance of another, and all that blessed effect which God has been so often pleased to work out of our social feelings, by sanctifying the means employed to move and quicken them, would be utterly lost; there would never be one sinner trembling by the fear of another, or the groans of conviction be

begotten of a neighbour's penitent sighs, or the consolation of a broken and a contrite heart be gladdened and enlightened at a similarly affected brother's joy and peace in believing. Moreover, society would not be blessed; for society, as such, has not asked for it, has offered no sacrifice, uttered no prayer. Thus, christian men could not join it; would be obliged to "come out from among them, and be separate from sinners;" for, without a blessing, there would be a curse in it, and why should they be destroyed with the people of Baal? "The ways of Sion do mourn," said the prophet, "because none come to the solemn feasts." Piety languishes, and moral prosperity soon abandons the land, where the sabbath is publicly neglected, and the sanctuary forsaken. "Did not your fathers thus?" said Nehemiah, appealing as we might do to the moral history of the nation, and "did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the sabbath." What success or stability could senators expect who missed the opportunity of bringing a blessing upon their measures, by rejecting a bill in favour of the Lord's-day?

Nehemiah the magistrate bore not the sword in vain ; to those who wilfully do so, a God of justice may turn its point upon their own bosoms, or leave them, like Saul, to fall upon it themselves.

3. A day of rest is necessary to man's moral duty, in his domestic character.

Beside the public duties of the sanctuary, there is also a sabbath to be observed at home. This is a day when family prayer and exposition of Scripture may, and ought to be, enlarged ; it is a day when abundant leisure is afforded the father to instruct his children, and the master his servants ; and in order to this, as little labour as possible in the necessary arrangements of their household, *christian* masters should expect from their servants, " knowing that their Master also is in heaven." Thus, then, the family sabbath should be kept holy at home, that the Lord of the sabbath may confer upon that house the family blessing.

Once more, a day of rest is necessary to the very existence of religion generally.

Of every kind of monument which is set up to commemorate particular events, that monument which consists in a day of celebration *is the most*

*likely to endure* ; and the more frequent the celebration recurs, the still more likely its continuance. Thus, then, the remembrance both of creation and redemption has been kept alive in the world by the weekly recurrence of the sabbath memorial. Without it, in a careless and inimical world like this, piety had long ago breathed her last, and with the public incense in the temple, private sacrifice had indubitably ceased at home. Had not the lamp of truth been weekly trimmed and fed with the holy oil of the sanctuary, it had long ago gone out, and left the world in darkness. Nothing but a day of rest, an ordinance that appeals to man's ease and convenience, a means that consults his interest in both worlds, a judicious harmonizing of pleasure and duty, of body and soul, of time and eternity ; nothing but the admirable and merciful provision of a day of rest, reminding us in its supply of our physical necessities, of those higher and more important moral wants, which it is intended and calculated to relieve ; nothing but such an institution could, humanly speaking, have kept truth on the earth, and the knowledge of Jehovah a resident *among his fallen creatures*. Wherever there is no sabbath, there is no worship—no religion. Well

aware of this principle were the infidels of revolutionary France, when to crush religion in the land, they struck the blow at the sabbath. And what was the immediate result of the blasphemous abolition? The house of God is turned, as of old, into a stable—a den of thieves. The word of God, in awful mockery, perchance, of the entry of the incarnate word into Jerusalem, is paraded through the streets on an ass, and after, burned by the multitude; the name of God is declared to be a lie, and his existence a fable; and, in fearful keeping with this fell apostasy, they denied the immortality of their own souls. The Redeemer's passion is justified as an execution; the Creator's altar usurped by a fitting image of the national debauchery—a prostitute, entitled the Goddess of Reason. The Holy Spirit is declared to be an idle tale, and the Evil one a bugbear for the superstitious. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;" and the apostle well details their national calendar, which was "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit,

malignity ; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God ; spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things ; disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." The whole nation was one moral suicide. Faith was slaughtered on her own altars, Hope poisoned with the food she fed upon, and lonely Charity went mad with her despair : Truth alone remained in the land in secret and proscribed, to testify against it, when her hour was come ; and it came, but not till when the sabbath returned, though the holy day has never yet recovered from the sacrilegious blow.

We thank God, the sabbath of England, much as it is violated by individuals, suffers not the legalized and public violations of our unhappy neighbours ; but we have the ugly portrait of the revolution to warn us what our nation would be, were we to follow their example. Then let us be seriously jealous of this blessed day ; let us acknowledge, both in a moral and physical point of view, what a day of thanksgiving, for the day itself is the day of rest, the holy sabbath of the Lord ; or rather, we should say, the holy " sabbath made for man," for He that " neither



sleepeth nor slumbereth" wanted not the rest himself. Jehovah is incapable of fatigue, and therefore independent of rest; it was his mercy made it on behalf of man; he blessed it to man, when he sanctified it to himself. Let us gather, then, in conclusion, a few brief topics of thankfulness for the blessed gift.

1. As a day of *rest*, it exhibits God's mercy, that it was vouchsafed to us after the fall of Adam.

Man for his rebellion was condemned to a life of *labour*. "In the sweat of thy face," said God, "shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." Every opening of the earth to deposit the seed, or to bring forth its produce, reminds man that out of it he was taken; that dust we are, that we feed and live upon dust, and unto dust we shall return. In this perpetual memento of his departure, what mercy to suspend the original curse of labour, in a rest of every seventh day, to give the poor condemned convict leisure for repentance, and opportunity to prepare for the final execution of his sentence. In the midst of all this judgment, as in all judgments this side eternity, God remembered mercy; the very curse of labour has been commuted into a means of

blessing,—we cannot dwell upon the thought,—and the curse of death has become a passage to eternal life. And every sabbath is the type and earnest of the gracious promise. But, my brethren, there are two eternities—an eternity of rest, and an eternity of trouble. They who have not enjoyed and solemnized the earthly rest, cannot hope to have the heavenly. They who have chosen, in their sabbath-breaking, the full unmitigated curse of labour here, must have their choice in the eternal curse of sorrow hereafter: for there is no pause in the torment, no suspension of the judgment, no return of a sabbath in hell.

2. As a day of rest, the sabbath is peculiarly grateful to the labouring classes.

Upon you, my brethren, the original sentence sometimes presses heavily; yet learn to be thankful that the law of England, equally with the law of God, provides you with a day of rest from your labours; a day of access to the means of religious knowledge and instruction; a day of leisure to reflect upon the morrow of eternity; a day of preparation for the concerns of the soul. The Bible had been a sealed book to the poor, but for that convenient and accessible means of

publication and exposition, which the frequent recurrence of a sabbath lecture-day affords them. In no one instance of the providence of grace is the wisdom of God so apparent, as in the institution of the sabbath for the spread and preservation of his truth. No other means could have answered the important end so well; this alone has kept piety in the world so long. The poor are the great majority in every nation under heaven; any institution, therefore, which is calculated for their benefit, and to engage them in any enterprise, is sure of the more general and more permanent endurance. Such an institution is the sabbath to the poor. But remember, brethren, that the abused means of grace confiscate the hope of glory; and neglect of privilege leaves you, not as you are, but a subject of greater condemnation.

3. We learn that though on this day the body is to rest, the soul is to wake her thoughts towards God.

In this view the day of rest is a figure of the grave where the body reposes, though the soul has sought her kindred heaven, and her God. In this sense let us all, especially on the sabbath, seek to be "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto

God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Let us "call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and let us honour him by not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words." Let us not incur the prophet's taxation on them who "swallow up the needy," &c., saying, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" Let us welcome it in coming, lament it when it is gone, and long for its speedy return, that when the sabbath-eve of death cometh, when no man can work more for ever, this body may keep its day of rest in sure and christian hope, when heavenly worship begins, to hear its summons to that other tabernacle, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens! Thus may the sabbath bell, which summons us, body and soul, into the service of the sanctuary here, remind us of the last trump of the archangel, which shall recal into spiritual union the soul, with her renewed and transfigured body, hereafter, that as on earth, so in heaven, they may together glorify the Lord for ever!

*Lastly.* Another, and a parting word to the sabbath-breaker. Poor enemy to thyself! thou

art a double suicide ; slaying thy body by stealing her rest, slaying thy soul by refusing her food! Thou art a double sabbath-breaker ; violating the one which thou mayest have here, robbing thyself of that which will be lost to thee hereafter! Thou art a double captive unto sin and Satan ; both heart and hand, will and way, soul and body, thou art his bondsman here, and thus thou wilt be a double prisoner, soul and body, in his chains hereafter! Oh flee for refuge then, while you have time to run ; flee to the sabbath sanctuary—well called a sanctuary—for the devil cannot harm you there, if you resist him, for then he will flee from you. Flee, yet not with the Icarian wings of your own devices, but with His almighty ones, who, like a dove, descended on your Saviour. Flee, for “the Lord will destroy this place,” where sinners dwell ; “look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all their plains ;” escape to the mountain, where the Cross directs you :” Thither “flee from the wrath *to come*,” which, though future and before us, must be fled from, as if it were *behind* ; flee still upward, ever upward, never resting short of God ; and the prophet tells you, “ye shall mount up with wings as eagles ;” of whom, however

fabulous the report, it shall be realized in your flight; your wings shall be stronger, and your force the greater, the higher you fly, the nearer you approach towards heaven. “Ye shall mount up with wings as eagles; ye shall run and not be weary, ye shall walk and not faint.” Not faint! oh no—except the one last fit of dying nature, from which grace shall revive thee in the arms of God. The Lord give our souls wings, as his ministering angels, to use them in his service here, that the same may bear us to his house hereafter!

## SERMON V.

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### MORAL USES OF THE SABBATH.

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LUKE XXIII. 54.

*“And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.”*

IN our last discourse we dwelt at large upon the necessity of the sabbath as a day of rest, touching both our physical and moral welfare. We proceed this evening to consider more at large the uses of this sacred rest, *i. e.* the proper sanctification of the sabbath. We shall, however, previously consider what are those acts of necessity and charity which form lawful exceptions to the general rule of rest; and endeavour to discover what manner of indulgences on this head our blessed Lord allowed.

First.—*Acts of necessity.* That only is a lawful necessity which Providence, and not creature circumstances, made such. For instance, Providence has so constituted our bodies,

that food is necessary for our subsistence every day; the proper preparation therefore of that food, we call a providential necessity. But if a man engage to perform in the week more secular business than he finds himself able to accomplish, without encroaching upon the sabbath, he has incurred a creature necessity; and as in the scale of moral obligation God is to be obeyed at all risks and losses, that encroachment is a violation of the sabbath law, which says, that in the "six days thou shalt do *all* that thou hast to do," that there may be nothing to be done on the seventh. God gives us six days to prepare for one, yet how anxious are they who are never "in the spirit on the Lord's day," to smuggle in a part of their week-day business on the sabbath; yet we never see the same anxiety to intrude a tittle of the sabbath duties into the week. Oh no; Mammon is welcome to a whole week, but "grudgingly, and of necessity, they scarce give unto God his *one* day. Alas! for that poor "stick-gatherer on the sabbath" to whom God's worship is a drudgery, but the world's business, or the devil's service, a relief and recreation.

But there are some cases of necessity, the lawfulness of which rests upon the Divine example



and permission. Thus our Lord said, "My Father worketh hitherto," meaning on the sabbath-day, as he does in still preserving our lives, and upholding his creation; "and I work," *i. e.* I also perform necessary and charitable acts, directed to the same end. As the Jews built their observance of the sabbath upon the fact of God's having rested on that day, our Lord's argument from this economy of Providence on the same day, completely answered their objection to his doing an act of mercy. This example of Providence, then, is our warrant for the performance of all such acts as the health or life of man or beast requires. "Which of you," said our Lord, "shall have an ass, or an ox, fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day?" At the same time let us be especially careful, that all these our acts of necessity come within the before-specified necessity of Providence, and not of our own inadvertency, or forcing, or neglect. Touching the cure of diseases, some have made a scruple of conscience in regard of a difference between imminent and chronic diseases; these esteem the latter unlawful to be healed on the sabbath, arguing, that since the patient had borne the malady so long,

it would not harm him to bear it one day longer, that the sabbath may be saved.

Tenderness of conscience is always lovely, and should never be the subject of rebuke, much less of ridicule: we wish therefore to be understood as suggesting nothing beyond an admonition from Scripture, when we allege our Lord's example for the healing of any manner of disease on the sabbath, whether chronic or otherwise. Not to mention the palsy, the impotent man, or others of a like kindred, let us turn to our Lord's remark on his healing the poor woman of her chronic infirmity of eighteen years' standing:—  
 “Doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering; and ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?” Passing by the particular use of the apposition of these two cases, does it not place them both on a par; making both equally lawful necessities? If so, there is no need of our making distinctions, where God has made none. The spirit in which an act is done, is the feature in which God beholds it; and though the apostle says, “Let no man

judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days ;” yet, though we are freed from the rigid ceremonial of the Jewish observance of the sabbath, still we are under greater and stricter obligations than the Jews themselves were; though having neither their day nor manner, we have the day of rest, the day of “ God, who is a Spirit, who is therefore to be worshipped in spirit and in truth;” and far as the spirit is above the letter, so far are our obligations of sabbath observance superior to the Jewish.

Secondly. *There are also limitations in the lawfulness of acts of charity.* There are many charitable acts which are not lawful on the sabbath. Thus it would be a charitable act to teach poor children any honest craft, to enable them to earn a livelihood ; but it would violate the sacred character and design of the day of rest to employ it for such purposes. The sabbath, as a day of lessons, is not for the body, which must rest, but for the soul, which must wake to her God. The distinctions may be more clearly shown from an example. Take those asylums of piety and nurseries of the Church—our Sunday schools. It is a charitable act to teach poor children to read

and write; but if they were taught to read out of any other book, or with any other view than to enable them to read the book of God, these lessons would be unlawful on the sabbath. An ability to read is indispensably necessary to open the Bible to the poor. We are therefore not only lawfully employed, but are also in the way of duty when teaching them. Our blessed Lord condescended to teach the poor, and notice children; where then is the mind so great, or the rank so exalted, or the feeling so delicate, as to blush to seek its pupils among the poorest of the community? Never is learning so dignified, or station so ennobled, or loveliness so beautified, as when opening the blessed book of Heaven to the little school of poor children at their feet. It is beginning angels' work below; it is following Jesus to the fishermen's huts of Galilee; it is imitating Him who "chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty." But we were about to observe, that the teaching them to read on the sabbath was only lawful, in respect of its necessity to their knowledge of Scripture; any other teaching which cannot be known to be as

indispensably necessary, must not be allowed. Thus, the propriety of teaching them to write, which has prevailed in some schools, may be justly questioned. Now, the art of writing, though a great help, is not indispensably necessary to the art of reading; perhaps, then, writing lessons are out of place in a Sunday school. Yet as passages of Scripture may be thus more deeply impressed on the memory by being used as copies for children, and as it is desirable to furnish the poor with means of communicating their knowledge and experience to their absent friends, perhaps the use of the Bible and of the sabbath to promote this end, may not be considered by some to be at variance with the sacred institution, considered as a day of means of religious instruction. They may esteem it a point to be left to the consciences of individuals, subject to the apostle's limitation—"Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." For ourselves, it appears to be not sufficient to say how *useful* an ability to write may be, to the better understanding of the Scriptures, since the same plea of utility may be urged in favour of lessons in geography, natural and political history, astronomy, and the

original languages in which Scripture was written. All these sciences would eminently contribute to the better elucidation of revealed truth; but the question is, cannot the runner read without them? need the wayfaring man, though a fool, err without them? cannot Jesus Christ, and him crucified, be learned without them? is heart-knowledge of God impossible without them? is the soul's salvation insecure without them? if not, then the teaching to write, and all other acquirements which are only *useful*, but not absolutely *necessary* to the knowledge of Scripture, appear to be so many violations of the sabbath, and the school which allows them must surrender its character as a religious institution, in which light only Sunday schools can be lawfully tolerated.

Upon the whole, then, we trust we have satisfactorily demonstrated the truth of this general rule of lawful exceptions to the sabbath rest. That those acts of necessity or charity are only lawful, so far as Providence has made them both acts of necessity, to the well-being of the body or the soul. In these cases, Divine Providence himself, whose only is the prerogative, virtually sanctions the charitable use of his sabbath, and discovers to us the truth of his own declaration,

that “the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.” Whenever therefore the moral or physical necessity of his creatures demands it, “the Lord of the sabbath” rightly places it at their disposal:—“I will have mercy,” says God, “and not sacrifice.”

To return then to our text, where we discover some profitable matter of reflection. We shall bring before your notice, briefly, three points:

I. The duty of preparing for the sabbath,—  
“that day was the preparation.”

II. Its due observance as a day of devotion.

III. The proper manner of closing the day.

And may that Holy Spirit, whose we are, and whom we serve, vouchsafe us here “the preparations of the heart, and the answer of the tongue,” that we may be together edified, and his holy name glorified as in heaven so on earth, now and ever. Amen!

I. *The duty of preparing for the sabbath.*  
“That day was the preparation:” which day, upon inquiry, we find was the Friday, the day before the Jewish sabbath, which began on the sunset of the Friday, and ended on the sunset of Saturday. Thus Moses said, “To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord; bake

that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that which ye will seethe, and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning." Here then, we remark the first point of preparation for the sabbath-day. Let every thing which can be prepared for use on the Sunday be ready on the Saturday, that there be as little work as possible necessary on the sabbath. Many devout Christians exhibit their moral benevolence by following the precept of Moses, in regard of having no preparation at all for food on the sabbath. It were well not only for our own better observance of the day, but for the relief of our dependants also, that this custom were generally adopted. The master, whose unnecessary indulgence on the Lord's-day prevents his servant from attending God's house, violates the sabbath by proxy and implication; nothing is more cruel and unkind than that want of feeling and consideration, which causes us to injure the manservant or the maid-servant in both body and soul,—a blow that may haply wound them in both worlds. It is no unmeaning sensibility to call this "the unkindest cut of all;" this is oppression no less than satanic; this is the true gall of bondage, and this "the iron that enters into the soul."



He who would wilfully debar his servant from the sanctuary, is but one degree removed from that evil one, who would keep a soul from heaven. Let us remember, then, they have souls to be saved in the common salvation, and that the domestic Sanballat, who hinders the building of the spiritual temple, shall not be numbered among the Lord's congregation. We might here descant upon the genuine policy of the measure, it being capable of easy proof, that the servant who faithfully serves God will, upon the highest principle, faithfully serve his "master according to the flesh, not with eye-service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God." And who has not felt the value of an upright trustworthy servant? We might, I say, use this argument as another inducement to our carefulness on behalf of the spiritual wants of our dependants, only that it becomes not the pulpit to mix temporal policy with spiritual duty—to use the hand of an Uzzah to support the ark.

Again: The desirableness of this preparation, touching temporal concerns, has been felt at times by every sincere Christian; we mean the general preparation, which leaves nothing to be done on the Monday which could be done on

the Saturday, that there be no temptation to make the sabbath a link between the past and coming week. It is, above all things, desirable to have the holy day (as its title "holy" intends) a separate, distinct, and devoted day, having nothing in common or in connexion with other days; a day more of the spirit than of the body—more of heaven than of earth—more a season borrowed from eternity, than a period selected from time. The most devout mind has sometimes felt its thoughts wandering, with Gehazi, from the prophet's house, after "the talents of silver and the changes of raiment," and it has taxed itself with the question, "Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments and olive-yards?" and so forth. It has felt the force of its own rebuke; has confessed, however willing the spirit, the flesh is weak; and acknowledged, that on this day especially the "very thought of foolishness is sin;" and prayed earnestly for grace to receive more grace, for more of "the hearing ear and understanding heart."

How much of this painful sense of weakness and lukewarmness had been spared them, had they made more preparation in the six days of the body, for the one day of the spirit! He that

knew the body's weakness gave us the six, to prepare the spirit for the due and profitable enjoyment of the one. Let us then, in the week, be more "diligent in business," that on the sabbath we may be more "fervent in spirit;" as in the former, by his providence, serving ourselves, so in the latter "serving the Lord." But if there be a secular matter left undone, whether of necessity or neglect, then pray God it may not be the holy morrow's "thorn in the flesh;" the ground of temptation, the common, the besetting, the Achillean point, upon which all men are vulnerable, the heel which the old serpent bruised, and still bruises, and how seldom, as in the beginning, without a fall. Do not let it trouble you, but leave it in the world, or rather leave it in the hands of Providence; ye cannot gain so much by being troubled in Jesus' presence, by the "carefulness about many things," as ye would lose by missing the choice of "the good part which shall never be taken from you." There is nothing gained, even in this world, in the long run, by "the money-changers," who bring their bartering spirits into the house of prayer; the Lord, as of old, overthrows their tables, and if not in the body, yet in the spirit,

Alas, for their spiritual bankruptcy! It is a mercy to the congregation, when the Lord cleanses the seats of those who sit not in the temple to worship.

Once more: besides the preparation for the necessary wants of the body on the day, and the closing of all worldly affairs before the day, there is the preparation touching the state of the soul. True, we cannot prepare ourselves; man can move the members of his body, but cannot of himself effect the motions of his soul. This is peculiarly and exclusively His work, who, from his own being, first breathed into our nostrils the breath of life. To him, then, must we appeal in prayer, for grace to enable us to prepare the thoughts of our hearts for religious contemplation; and, as David said, "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble, thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." Thus let us, like the Jews, begin, by our preparations, the sabbath on the evening before, and thus begin where God began the first sabbath. For darkness was before the light in creation; and God called each following "evening and morning" the successive day, and used the same

language (not morning and evening, but “ evening and morning,”) on the seventh, and so began his holy rest on the evening before that morning, which, *both* together, he called his sabbath.

It is ours to follow the Divine example, and thus,

1. To abstain on the evening previous to the Sunday from all such occupations and amusements which are calculated to alienate the mind from sober and devout reflection. Thus, then, late convivial parties on the Saturday, especially where such excesses as in gambling, or drinking, and the like, are the custom, are so many violations of the sabbath—accessories before the fact—in unfitting the mind for the morrow’s solemnity. The pale and feverish brow of recent revelry but ill-becomes the house of prayer. The sacrifice of such a state of mind God has not required; its very “ incense is an abomination;” their sabbaths and their calling of assemblies God cannot away with; “ even their solemn meeting will be iniquity.” But, on the other hand, if the evening of preparation for the sabbath be spent at home, in that quiet air of expectation which silently proclaims throughout the house, “ To-morrow is the rest of the

holy sabbath unto the Lord;" by invoking his grace, and consulting his blessed word, and retiring to rest at such seasonable hour that we may be enabled, with the Divine blessing, to present our composed and refreshed bodies in the morning "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto the Lord;" this is the only profitable approach to the sanctuary, this the preparation becoming its solemnities, and this is none other than our reasonable service.

We briefly notice,

II. *The due observance of the sabbath as a day of devotion.*

Much that may be said on this head was necessarily anticipated in our remarks upon the sabbath as a day of rest. We there described the duties of man in his social and domestic character, touching public worship and private instruction of his children and dependants at home. Our present remarks concern the man individually; and we shall find the most perfect summary of his duties in this respect, which the Bible contains, in Isaiah lviii. 13: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath;"—the *foot* in Scripture is frequently used for any labour generally; thus David said, in a sense

that explains this passage, (and Scripture always best explains itself,) “ I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word ;”—if thus, “ thou turn away thy foot ” from ordinary occupation on the sabbath—“ from doing thy pleasure on my holy day.” There are pleasures pure and innocent at other seasons, which become the pleasures of sin if indulged on the sabbath, when none but God’s pleasure is to be allowed, for it is God’s day ; not to mention those who openly violate the sabbath by making it the day of recreation and amusements, and whose “ sabbath-day’s journey ” is not to the temple at Jerusalem, but to the inn at Jericho ; and, alas ! how frequent are the visitations that befall the sabbath-breakers ! What shall be said of those half-hearted worshippers who give the morning or the noon to the ways of the world, and bring the poor remnant of the maimed and broken day as an offering to the sanctuary at night ? Can they believe it likely that the jealous God will accept the unhallowed fragment ? Oh, no ! none but the whole burnt-offering will God abide ; the only unentire and broken sacrifices God ever accepts are the “ sacrifices of a broken spirit ;” and even there

the faith must be *whole*. These pleasures of our own must be given up, and purer pleasures to be found on the sabbath, which further we are to call “a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable;” and in what sense honourable the prophet tells us—thou “shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways;” “for my ways are not as your ways, nor my thoughts as your thoughts.” By our *own ways* is meant, in scriptural language, our usual course of life. We are required to abstain, then, from all matters of ordinary business or pleasure; from the perusal of all books, papers, or letters, which are not strictly of a religious character; from wasting the sacred hours in unnecessary dress, the which is too common a vice on the sabbath among the humbler walks of life; from ministering to the luxurious appetite; and, in short, from every act upon which we could not appeal to conscience, and inquire, If it were befitting the Lord’s-day.

Again: “Thou shalt honour him, not finding thine own pleasure,” which we have observed before; “nor speaking thine own words,” conversing in a secular spirit, as we are too apt to do even on the threshold of the sanctuary, on the strangers or friends whom we noticed among the congrega-



tion; on the mere creature merits or faults of the sermon, or the psalms; on the new dresses, fashions, gains and losses, markets, diversions, news, politics, arrivals, the state of the weather, of the season, of the crops, and even of the accidents, diseases, and deaths, of the neighbourhood, which, unless observed upon in a calm and solemn reference to Him in whose hands is the disposal and ordinance of all things, do assuredly minister unto sin. On this day, in the words of the apostle, as much as lieth in us, as much as human infirmity will allow us, we should "have our conversation in heaven." Then, instead of the sabbath being a gloomy day, as they only feel it who cannot "delight themselves in the Lord," who have no taste or relish for the purer exercises of the soul; then shall we heartily "call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable;" honourable to the love and wisdom that devised the means of grace,—honourable to the soul who loves it for her hope of glory.

Again: if the above be the scriptural account of the manner and extent in which the holy day is to be observed, what answer shall those professing Christians make who confess no difference

between the sabbath and any other day of the week, or who pretend to keep every day as a sabbath? Is it possible they can live in the world, and avoid “doing their own ways, finding their own pleasure, and speaking their own words,” in the course of the lawful business of the week? It is true, religion is an every day concern, and we should endeavour “to live each day as if the last;” but every day is not the sabbath; God has required but one such scrupulous and devoted day in every seven, why then should they “be wise above what is written,” and virtually reply to God, that they know themselves better than he who made them, and can govern themselves without the aid of his gracious ordinances? We are not to be answered by an affirmation so injurious to the honour of God, that the sabbath, which we have in former discourses shown to be an institution so essentially necessary to the existence of God’s truth in the world, was one which, nevertheless, Infinite Wisdom had overlooked, and therefore man’s wisdom invented it for him; and being of human invention, consequently its observance a mere matter of expediency, and not of conscience. We trust the Divine appointment of the sabbath

has been clearly proved to you ; then God has made a difference between that day and the rest. Let man, then, at his peril, confound the day of rest with the days of labour ; the day of heaven with the days of earth ; the day of the Spirit with the days of flesh.

Moreover, let it for a moment be granted, that there are some beings so different and superior to their fellows around them, that the sabbath means of grace is an immaterial ordinance to them, and that they are fully persuaded in their own minds that they can worship God acceptably without it. We would ask such, do they owe no duty, no compassion, to the vast majority of their weaker brethren ? are they, by their example of absence from the sanctuary, “ to destroy him for whom Christ died ? ” “ None of us,” says the apostle, at the end of the passage which these anti-sabbatarians misquote for their authority, wherein it is plain, from the whole scope of the chapter and design of the Epistle, that Jewish holy days generally are meant, and not the special holy day, wherein they were “ to forsake not the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is ; ” — “ none of us,” said he — and the words are conclusive on the point

of duty we contend for,—“none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth for himself;” but this living and dying is “unto the Lord;” that is, following the Lord, in obedience and trust walking in his ways. The Lord lived and underwent many things, as his baptism, circumcision, and the like, altogether unnecessary to himself individually, but strictly necessary to him in his relation to us, as our great example. And thus the consistent followers of “that light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world,” endeavour so to “let their light shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.” Thus the ancient church had her solemn assemblies, to promote, by the public example of the faithful, the more general acknowledgment of God. Thus the early Christians, though their assembling together was ever accompanied with peril to their lives, still, early in the morning, and late at night, met to keep their public sabbath, and considered the day, without the public duty, to be *unsanctified*. Believers have no other opportunity of setting society, as such, an example; and here is at once both the point of duty, and of expediency. Man, as a social being, is too apt

to forget that he will have to answer for his abuse of the talent of society, according to the good or evil his influence promoted therein, in his day and generation. We may suggest it as a general rule, that as in non-essential points of doctrine and practice it is the duty of the few to yield to the majority, that the peace of the church may be preserved; surely, in a matter of such acknowledged utility, to say the least of the sabbatic institution, whatever opinion be indulged upon its Divine authority, it is a sin, and a satanic subtlety, for any man to cast a stumbling-block, by his own neglect, in the way of his brother to the sanctuary.

III. We have noticed the preparation for the sabbath; its exclusive observance as a day of devotion; and now we inquire into the *fitting manner of bringing it to its close*.

As it began, so should it end, in prayer and praise. The solemn feelings which were excited in the congregation should not be left behind us on the altar, like the cold embers of an offered sacrifice, but the sacred fire should be brought away, and carefully carried home in our bosoms, lest the rude winds of the world extinguish it by the way. All the light is wanted for the family

altar; and there let the good man of the house worship with his children; there, each before his own domestic or lonely altar, let us all bow down; and,

1. In prayer, that it may please God to forgive us "the many things in which we offend all;" the omissions of duty of which we have been guilty; the imperfection of our best services; the little improvement and increase we have made in grace; the coldness of spirit in which we have detected ourselves; and the wandering thoughts which we have indulged during, or between, the services of the day.

Then should follow the prayer, that the doctrines we have heard bring forth, in our amended lives and conversations, the manifold fruits of the Spirit; that the prayers we have offered up be answered, not according to our will, but according to God's will; not according to the ignorance and short-sightedness of the petitioners, but according to His knowledge who sees all things in their various connexion and tendencies; and according to His benevolence, who careth for our souls. That every faithful effort, no matter where, to enlarge the borders of Zion, be blessed with increased, and still increasing success; that

the glory of the day may soon arrive, when all the tribes of earth shall keep her sabbath, as unanimously, as heartily, and exclusively, as it is observed among the holy ones of heaven;—and, finally, that the past day may have brought us nearer to our God and heaven, another step out of the world, and so much farther from the path to hell.

2. Let us close the day in praise, giving thanks for the day of grace and privilege;—thanks, that we were born in a land of sabbaths and ordinances;—thanks, that we have health and opportunity vouchsafed us to embrace the means, and grace to incline our hearts, to profit by them;—thanks, for the extensive good which we trust has been effected throughout the spiritual Zion;—thanks for the Divine support which has been afforded to the public ministration of the truth;—thanks and praises for all the temporal blessings that have encompassed us on every side, and especially for all the spiritual blessings with which we have been blessed in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Thus the pious mind, which prepared itself for the sabbath, thus on the sabbath prepares itself, renews its strength for the coming week;

and thus the blessing which sanctified his day of rest follows its happy possessor through his days of labour. This is the true economy of life; this the genuine policy of faith; this the healthful aliment of hope; this the sweetest exercise of love; this the travelling that leads to heaven, while it shows the way.

Two reflections upon the whole subject shall suffice us to conclude.

We have dwelt upon the necessity of preparation for the sabbath. Our departed friends, who are now in the blessed world of spirits, have found that this our whole life was the preparation for the sabbath of death—that time was the preparation for eternity, and earth the preparation for heaven.

If preparation be necessary for these imperfect sabbaths, that come but to pass away, what preparation have we made for that sabbath which is coming to endure for ever? “Brethren, the time is short.” To some one of our souls may the angel of death be commissioned to say this night, “To-morrow is the rest of the *eternal* sabbath unto the Lord.” Is thy house in order, ready to allow thee entrance “to that other house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?”



There are many who have not granted unto them the day of preparation; but the summons is, not to-morrow, but "this night, thy soul shall be required of thee." In the mean time, every hour is a means of grace; and if the last hour find us ready, life will have been a privilege, and death will be, instead of a curse, as in its origin, the chief and last blessing of life in the end. Its original order will be reversed eternally; for the same death that first expelled us from the paradise here, shall be the means to restore us to the better paradise hereafter. But as man began here to leave behind him the former, man must begin here to press forward towards the latter; as we have all together gone astray, so must we all return; and life is so brief and so uncertain, that the journeyman in Scripture is always bade to hasten, and flee, and run, and walk, and never to sit at ease, even in Sion; for though he may be there feeding upon the fruit of the tree of life, the serpent, as of old, may be offering him that which is forbidden. We are under a moral, as well as a natural, sentence of labour; we are to up, and be doing; to up, and be going; and never to rest short of the summit of the spiritual Mount Nebo, whence our

souls may clearly trace and certify the prospect of the promised land. But let us not be one of those idlers of Israel, who delay their return to God, as if it were always too soon to begin the journey, but never too late to reach heaven in time. “Forty years long was God grieved with the people in the wilderness,” but he shut them out of Canaan at last. Is there a forty years’ sinner here who is still in the moral wilderness? Perhaps your Lord for the last time addresses you, as he did Jerusalem of old,—“If thou hadst known:” he makes no promise for the future; but in reference to all the long guilty past, he speaks a present, though a last, offer of grace to you,—“Even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace,” to the present and eternal peace and sabbath of the soul:—Oh, tarry not, “at least in this thy day,” lest the morrow come to close the final sentence with that awful and irrevocable word, “Now, they are for ever hidden from thy eyes.” Oh, rather embrace at once the other now, “for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed;”—“behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” But if we content ourselves, like the false prophet, with the knowledge,

“ I shall see him, but not *now*; I shall behold him, but not *nigh* ;” alas, for the impenitent and unpardoned sinner’s sight, when, from their trembling distance—

“ Every eye shall then behold him  
 Robed in dreadful majesty ;  
 Those who set at nought and sold him,  
 Pierc’d and nail’d him to the tree,  
 Deeply wailing, shall the true Messiah see.”

*Lastly.* A word to those whose anxious feet are already “ shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,” of the glad tidings of that sabbath “ rest that remaineth for the people of God.”

Happy in your hopes of heaven, well described as the prepared place for a prepared people ; be encouraged to go on from strength to strength, running the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author, till ye find him to be the finisher, of your faith ; praying always with all prayer ; conversing with heaven, and learning its language ; and having fellowship with the Father through the Son, who, as our elder brother, hath brought us into the holy family, by the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, through the Holy Ghost, given to us. See that

ye confer not with flesh and blood, but lay aside every weight, and the easily besetting, the bosom sin; walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; worthy of the name of Christ, worthy of the blood of your spiritual descent, worthy of your prospects of the goodly heritage, worthy of the communion of saints and angels, worthy of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. And thus to walk, you must be led; then here you have the word to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth;" and to you who are prepared to follow him to the end, he said in the body, "I go to prepare a place for you;" and in the spirit, there he sitteth at the right hand of God, ready to apportion the many mansions of his Father's house to his faithful followers, and there to welcome his prepared people "to the kingdom prepared for them (in the Lamb that was slain) from the foundation of the world."

## SERMON VI.

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### THE SABBATH A TYPE OF HEAVEN.

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#### REVELATION XXI. 22.

*“ And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty  
and the Lamb are the temple of it.”*

IN this, our last sermon on the Sabbath, we shall consider it in its character of a type of heaven. We have had frequent occasion to refer to it under this view already ; we hope to point out the type more distinctly and forcibly, in a whole sermon, devoted to the subject, and which we trust will not be deemed unprofitable, seeing that a Christian's interest in any theme is always dependant upon, and proportional to, its reference and connexion with the heavenly world. We have taken our text from the writings of the last of the christian prophets, in whose descriptions of that heavenly world, which is to be the end of this last dispensation to man, we remark

a becoming sublimity and consistency of character, and a peculiar point of coincidence with the prophecies of Malachi, the last of the Jewish prophets, who concluded his writings with foretelling the coming kingdom of heaven in the gospel, which was to be the end of his dispensation. The latter referred to the kingdom of heaven in the body, which idea of a kingdom was borrowed, as heretofore observed, from the purer days of the Jewish theocracy, when the Lord their God was King of the people, and they had no other; so John refers to the real theocracy, the kingdom of heaven in the spirit, when other lords shall have no more dominion over us, but God shall be all in all.

There is a kingdom of heaven now in the world; but for the two little tribes that follow the spiritual house of David, there are the ten that belong to Jeroboam. The moral census of the world, still, as it ever did, exhibits but a little flock, a poor minority, on the side of Zion. But this melancholy state of things is not to be always so, nor is so destined to be long, for "Ethiopia," says the Psalmist, "shall *soon* stretch forth her hands unto God;" the real All-hail King, who shall live for ever, is to set up,

an image,—“the brightness of the Father’s glory, the express image of his person,”—an image, universal as the deluge, and higher than the scale of Babel, before which, “all people, nations, and languages, shall fall down and worship.” All shall know him, from the least even unto the greatest; and in the millennial dispensation, without respect of persons, or revealed exceptions, all shall become new creatures, fitted for “the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,” and the true theocracy shall be restored, when “He that sitteth upon the throne” shall make “all things new,” and “at the name of Jesus”—(a name by which, in that day, men shall delight to be called)—“every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!” But even in that blessed state of things, so far as we know, there will still be labour and rest, sorrow and joy, pain and pleasure, life and death. It will be, in a more eminent degree than ever known on this side eternity, heaven begun below, but not heaven itself. There will be, it would seem, the full universal exercise of the means of grace, but not the full consummation of the hope of glory.

It will be a dispensation of the excellent glory, but not the perfect fruition of the same glory. We are not, then, about to dwell upon the sabbath as a type of the millennium, (would that the better observance of the sabbath warranted our calling it the weekly millennium, the seventh day's personal reign of Jesus in every heart!) our subject is the sabbath, as the institution was intended to be, and as it might be, the type of heaven. To all who faithfully observe it, it is such a type, and they have felt, and remarked it to be so.

1. *As a day of rest from labour, and of exclusive devotion to the contemplation of heavenly themes, it is a pleasant figure of the rest that remaineth for the people of God.* A rest to be employed, and the active energies of the soul will find abundant employment, in the pure and undivided contemplation of the glory and enjoyment of God's presence, and celebration of his praises throughout eternity. The sacrifice of praise will be the only sacrifice to be offered in heaven.

2. *The sabbath in connexion with public worship, in bringing all classes of society together in a moral equality before God, is a type*



*of that assembly, where the rich and poor meet together, for the Lord is the maker of them all."*

Here the sabbath, like its Divine Author, "putteth down the mighty from their seats, and exalteth the humble and meek." Here, as there, will be no distinctions, except in the degrees of holiness; and though one star shall differ from another in glory, all shall be stars of light. But in this sabbath-house, the sinner and the saint may be mingled together round the same altar, and man, who cannot read the secrets of the bosom, is unable to distinguish them; but not so in the sabbath above. There will be a great day of separation between the righteous and the wicked; they must meet but once more after this tabernacle be dissolved, and that in the presence of the Judge, and then the distinctions between sin and holiness will be fixed in the great intervening gulf, to widen and endure eternally. Men may separate at the doors of this tabernacle, and meet here again; but the parting at the gates of heaven will be for ever.

3. *The sabbath, in connexion with that general difference and decency of apparel, and cleanliness of person, which pervades all classes, is a type of that heaven, where the worshippers*

*shall be "clothed upon with salvation," and where our "vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body," who shall "subdue all things to himself."*

The influence of decent clothing upon the softness of manners, and of a serious and respectable assembly, as at church, upon the solemnity of feeling, cannot fail to have been acknowledged by all persons. It is a prominent excellency among the many uses of the sabbath. Here there is time, place, and occupation, all conspiring to invest the assembly with an air of seriousness and devotion. Thus also, though in an infinitely higher degree, shall all the glorious array, high pomp and circumstance of heaven, combine to quicken the rapture of the saints in light.

*4. The sabbath, as a day of the communion of saints in the body, and in connexion with the promise of the more immediate presence of God in the midst of them, presents a lively emblem of that more blessed communion of the spirits of just men made perfect before the throne, where Jesus sits at God's right hand.*

It is a type of that place where the true Shekinah sits between the everlasting cherubim, and the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the

temple of it ;” which brings us to the investigation of the meaning of our text :—“ And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” It is the apostle’s vision of heaven. Our discourse will be to attempt an inquiry into the meaning of there being no temple in heaven. And may the strong help and influence of the Holy Spirit accompany the minister in speaking, and the people in hearing, the word of life, that we may feel “ it is good to be here ! ”

“ I saw no temple therein.” This does not mean that heaven is a place without devotion—a place of no worship ; on the contrary, every portrait of heaven, sketched by the pencil of inspiration, describes it as a place where worship is the chief, the exclusive employment. Thus the four-and-twenty elders are said to “ sing a *new* song ;” then they had sung other songs which, in comparison of this, were old, yet this song will be ever new. “ Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof : for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.” The sacrifice of praise,

as it is the only, so is it the perpetual offering of heaven. "I saw no temple therein," evidently means, then, that there will be no particular part or place of the heavenly kingdom favoured with God's presence, above any other part. Thus, then, as the city is said to have "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof;" so has the heavenly Jerusalem no need of "a temple therein," "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

In corroboration of this commentary, we observe—

1. *A temple involves the idea of a place of worship in distinction from other places.*

Thus, the temple at Jerusalem was considered a holy place, in distinction from other parts of the city; thus the city itself was accounted holy, as containing the temple, above other parts of the land; and thus Judea, generally, as the habitation of God's people, and more particularly to us, as the scene of our Saviour's incarnation, has been termed the Holy Land. It was, moreover, unlawful to offer sacrifices in any other place except in the temple. Now there are no such distinctions in the heavenly world: the

whole heaven is equally God's residence, equally holy. If his glory once inhabited the temple only, it there "inhabiteth eternity," fills all space, and sanctifies all "the many mansions." Worship belongs to all and every part of it; altogether it is itself a temple for ever open, and full of worshippers, a temple whose altar is the Lord himself, whose priests are the blessed congregation, whose sabbath is eternity, whose courts are infinite space, "whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are praise."

*2. A temple, besides the idea of a distinct place, implies devotion to be a distinct part of the employment of the community where it is placed.*

In the body, man has a thousand anxieties, which distract his attention and divide his heart from God. He is obliged to keep his religious exercises as things apart from ordinary life, having nothing in common with his usual routine of existence. In this sense also "there is no temple in heaven," for there is no variation or shadow of turning; no suspension of, or distinction in, the constant employment of the society of heaven. Nothing to interrupt or impede the sweet flow of devotional feeling, the innumerable

streams of glory roll on for ever into the river of life, for ever fed and replenished from the heavenly fountains; there are no stagnations, and no troubled waters in that land of promise. "And there," says the apostle, "shall be no more curse,"—neither the curse of labour, nor the curse of sorrow.—There by that river grows the tree of life, but without the forbidden fruit, for every ransomed soul that gains his entrance into this paradise, is welcome "to put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever:"—"and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." There shall it be an endless, an eternal sabbath, unconscious of a yesterday or morrow; time will be a thought forgotten, still in the same unvarying and invariable round of heavenly rapture, thanks, and praise: "the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there:" the true Joshua shall command his sun to stand still upon it for ever.

3. *A temple involves the idea of worship at particular seasons of the year, and hours of the day.*

Thus, the temple of the former church had

her annual Passover, the feast of Pentecost, and the feast of Tabernacles: all which festivals celebrated events peculiar only to the national history of the Jews. Thus, there were the daily hours of prayer alluded to in Acts iii. 1, which were the third, sixth, and ninth hours of the day, corresponding to our nine, twelve, and three o'clock. In this sense also "there is no temple in heaven." There are no seasons; there is no clock to mete the passing of eternity. There are no particular or private commemorations of events in heaven. The one act of common interest to all the heavenly hosts, "the redemption which is by Christ Jesus," forms the universal theme of praise, the subject of the "new song" before referred to, which is never to grow old. No matter what distinctions of tongue or dispensation divided them below; Jew and Gentile are all one there, and together sing in heavenly harmony the "song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." The law and the gospel are magnified together; justice and love have both their glory, there more especially and fully "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Again: as we have before observed, there can be in the realms of everlasting day—day without morning, noon, or night,—day of endless and immutable meridian,—no consciousness of periods, or notes of division. Thus the worship of the angels, which has no particular locality, no distinct engagement, no peculiar commemoration, has likewise no special occasions or appointments,—the sabbath which began on the resurrection morning, so called morning, from the analogy in the act of rising, to the natural period of awakening out of sleep,—the sabbath which then began, shall be like the risen spirits which commence it, without another pause or change, to endure for ever. Immortal spirits, incapable of further sensation of fatigue or languishment, will keep eternal sabbath, and with “the cherubim and seraphim continually cry,” Holy the Father, holy the Son, and holy the Holy Ghost, thrice holy “Lord God of sabaoth; heaven and earth are full—(God hasten the period when they equally shall be!)—of the majesty of thy glory.”

4. *A temple involves the idea of a priest, or priests performing worship, on behalf of the congregation.*



In this sense also there will be no temple in heaven! True we have now such a High-priest who hath entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; and what a glorious yet wonderful thought it is! and where is the parallel among the gods of the heathen, that the *God* we worship should be our *Priest*, not merely Priest and King, which has had similitude among men, but Priest, and God, ever living to make intercession for us? So long as the gospel dispensation endures, *i. e.* to the end of the world, will he abide our advocate with the Father; but when the judgment-day be passed, and the mediatorial office be ceased, then shall the great, the High-priest God, leave his Father's throne no more, no longer intercede on behalf of sinners, and for the saints it will then be no longer necessary; but he will take the throne as the object of everlasting worship, and instead of being Priest for the congregation, to him shall the redeemed and glorified congregation be "*kings and priests for ever.*"

In the body he was, by the influence of his grace, their great High-priest, for without him they had neither the power nor inclination to worship; but in the spirit they will possess both

power and inclination to worship him in spirit and in truth. There they will want and wait for no mouth or minister, for all the blessed congregation will be ministers themselves, all united in the common and eternal priesthood, without disorder of services, or confusion of degrees, offering the unanimous sacrifice of everlasting praise. The sabbaths here are solemnized before the altar, and the priest alone serves at the altar. This sabbath hereafter will be celebrated before the throne; and not the priests only, but all the people of God, shall bring their common sacrifice, bow down, and worship: all shall equally behold the glory, and every face partake of its reflected beams.

5. *A temple involves the idea of a defined and limited space.*

In this sense there is no temple for His glory whom "the heaven of heavens cannot contain." In these temples below a few only suffice to fill the space, and there can enter no more; but in the world of spirits, though so many have been called already, yet there is room! Just so the renewed heart, which has been made "the temple of the Holy Ghost within it," becomes possessed of boundless

capacity for receiving the things of God, and still for more and more grace, "yet there is room." Wherever God is, there is no end, or bound, or limitation; and thus, though we cannot describe the properties of the heavenly world, we know it must be a world of infinity in space, and of eternity in duration.

Right blessed will be the congregation admitted into this heavenly sabbath-house, where, without let or hindrance, every eye shall see the glory of God, every ear shall hear the psalms of praise, and every angel spirit comprehend and entertain the whole.

Once more. *A temple involves the idea of a material, and therefore a perishable, structure.*

We shall not enter upon a speculative inquiry into what kind of atmosphere the blessed spirits breathe, or what manner of locality will be necessary for the raised bodies of the resurrection-day. If the knowledge and understanding of these mysteries had been necessary or profitable to us, doubtless their history had formed a part of revelation. We cannot define what the apostle meant by a "*spiritual body*;" we know not of what high degree of subtle refinement body or matter is capable; but we know "that things

which are impossible with men, are possible with God;" and that he who by his Spirit prepared a body of matter for the Lord Jesus, could, by the same Spirit, raise from the scattered and decomposed particles of the natural bodies of men, "a spiritual body," incapable of further waste or perishableness, to be a fit residence for the immortal spirit. Neither can we say whether a locality of a similar subtle and spiritualized material will be prepared for the habitation of these embodied spirits of the just; but this we know, that of whatever nature be the kingdom of heaven, it shall endure for ever. We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have another house not made with hands, *eternal* in the heavens."

In the sense, then, of a passing and material structure, there is "no temple in heaven," for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. What more could be desired than God and the Lamb, the Deity and the sacrifice? Is this the temple of heaven? This also is the temple of the church; this the temple in every believer's heart; this the temple that must be there, or ever he be admitted into that other temple of the Lord God Almighty and the

Lamb, eternal in the heavens. There are the blessed ones, living stones in the house of God; nay more, living temples within the great common temple of them all; each a heaven in the heaven of heavens, where each has his sabbath in the sabbath of sabbaths, under the mild reign and disposition of the everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace! Have they loved the sabbath here? Much more shall they call that blessed sabbath hereafter “a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable.” Oh! for such a region where the sabbath is eternal; the congregation eternal; the temple eternal; the worship eternal; and “the God over all, blessed for evermore;” Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—a Triune Eternal! Brethren, are we walking the paths that lead to this Eternal?

In conclusion, a few reflections may be suggested, to wind up the whole subject.

We have attempted, at the end of each succeeding discourse, such practical improvement of that particular view of the sabbatic institution which then engaged our attention, so that there will be no necessity for a recapitulation. From the consideration of a sabbath being the sole employment of heaven, we observe—

1. *They who have no taste for the sabbath here, which comes but rarely, and its visits so short, how can they have any relish, hope, or anticipation, of that sabbath of heaven, which is without intermission of days, eternal?*

Alas for the man to whom the sabbath is a weary day! What would an endless sabbath be to such an one? Heaven itself would be a hell, and the presence of God, deeper torment than damnation. But let us reason the point with the man to whom the sabbath is heaviness. Why does he ever come to God's house at all? Is not this act the admission of an opponent in favour of his secret consciousness of his sense of duty? Is it not plain that such an one is inwardly, and more than he is perhaps aware of, convinced of the necessity of sabbath-keeping to his soul's salvation? So surely, then, as judgment will condemn abuse of privilege, so surely will these sparing and unfrequent attendances at the house of God; these secret misgivings of conscience, rise up in judgment, arrayed against the man who, having known so well, yet had wilfully done so ill. There are those who make their dislike of the minister an excuse for neglecting the sabbath-house; but God will remind

them he did not require men to seek his house to listen to the words of his servant, but to obey the word of the Master. The proper object of religious services is not to hear discourse from the creature, but to offer up prayers to the Creator. You come not here to look at a man, but to worship God. True, the gift of "sound speech, which cannot be condemned," is a talent for which its possessor should thank God, and pray for grace rightly to employ it in his service; but be it ever remembered, every gift is only to be esteemed as a means, and as means only to be admired in proportion to the usefulness they discover in promoting the end of grace, *i. e.* the conversion of sinners "out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Still, after all, prayer should be the bulk and burthen of public worship, prayer in which all may join, and thus all the congregation become, in effect, priests unto God, and thus more nearly assimilate these sabbath-days below to the blessed sabbaths above.

Again. Perchance some of us attend the house of prayer from fashion or habit, or for the purpose of setting an example; or some from still less worthy motives, to acquire "a good

report from them which are without." Fashion, or habit, or good example, or fair report, will not each, or altogether, save the soul. To each one of such attendants at God's house the sabbath service must needs be weary and unprofitable, because they lack the only spirit that can render the means of grace pleasant and satisfying to the mind, and that is, a humble faithful desire to please God, and to seek salvation. Where this desire is in the heart, religion cannot fail of pleasing, for they come to God's house not to please themselves but to please God; not with any reference to the creature, but in pure and undivided devotion to the Creator. Alas for the man that would fain prostitute religion to the furtherance of carnal objects, make God's altar his stage, and God's praises the mask in which to perform the character which his heart neither loves, or knows, or deserves! It will be no masquerade on the day of judgment; not only faces, but all *hearts* also, shall be open "before Him with whom we have to do."

2. *What comfort to the pious worshipper the sabbath, as a type of heaven, affords his mind!*

Sickness has sometimes prevented your



enjoyment of your weekly sabbath here; there will be no more pain to interrupt your happy observance of the eternal sabbath hereafter. You have not profited equally on every sabbath here; there will be no difference in the constant edification and refreshment of your spirits hereafter. Painful anxieties of the flesh, touching your means of existence, your children or your prospects, have sometimes robbed the comfort of your sabbaths here; there will be no wants, no gloomy anticipations, to molest you in your sabbath hereafter. The death or dying hours of beloved kinsmen have sometimes kept your wounded hearts from the sanctuary here; "there will be no more death" or dying among your fellow-immortals to cause an absence from the congregation hereafter. There is a feeling of melancholy steals over the bosom when we look around this tabernacle, and behold the vacant seats of those that we once rejoiced to meet before God, but who are now dead and gone, lying among the silent congregation in the parish grave-yard; but stay the tear, bereaved mourners, there is another sabbath-house wherein ye shall all meet again, and never miss a single other more, when

ye shall “ sit down with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, in the kingdom of God.” Satan has often tried and sorely tempted you in the midst of the congregation here, but he will never reach you in the congregation hereafter ; “ for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” Oh, who can choose but love the sabbath on earth, seeing it is a figure of such a sweet sabbath in heaven ? who would break a means of grace that led to such a hope of glory ? The sabbath possesses no small interest in its retrospective view as a day of commemoration of the creation, and, what was greater, the redemption of man ; but in no point does it appear so lovely to the believer as in its prospective view, as a type and earnest of the blessedness of heaven. In the body the believer on every sabbath is in a more eminent degree “ dead unto sin,” and “ buried with Christ,” and so will he wish to be, until that last, that real resurrection-sabbath, when he shall rise into “ the sanctuary and true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.”

*Lastly.* After all that we have said in favour of the sabbath, in this and in our previous discourses ; of the grandeur and importance of

the events it commemorates; of its necessity, as a day of rest to men as individuals; of its necessity, as a day of devotion, to the wants of society, and to the existence of religion generally; of its use, in perpetually reminding and preparing us for another and a better state of being; *after all these reflections, what has the unbeliever to say against the sabbath?* Can he show that the observance of a holy day does not make men holier and happier; does not improve society; is not necessary to man's present and eternal welfare? Alas! there are many kinds of folly in the world, but none so desperate as that of infidelity; whereof there are two orders, the one an order of open theoretical Sadducees, who "believe no resurrection, neither angel or spirit;" the other, and more numerous order, practical Sadducees, in the professional guise of believers, who hold both, yet live as if they secretly believed in neither. To the first party, the professed uncircumcised unbeliever, be it observed, there is nothing which revelation addresses to the mind wholesomely to humble and abase its pride, so really degrading to humanity, as the insult which the pride of infidel reason offers to the soul, by slandering her origin,

and denying her immortality. What a grovelling spirit must possess that man's mind, whose only hope is, by-and-by, to slink away into abstract nothingness, to find a refuge in annihilation, and let the once haughty reason yield the palm to living instinct; nay, welcoming a condition inferior to the meanest worm that crawls upon its ashes, for surely any thing that lives has a point of superiority over that which is dead. Shall they smile at the superstition of religion? all the superstitions of Pagandom never betrayed such a folly as this. But we cannot enter now into any exposure of the moral nakedness of infidelity; we simply observe, that so far from injuring the cause of truth, it rather ministers to her triumph, as the sublimity of wisdom shines more apparently in the contrasted presence of folly. The whole economy of Providence discovers to us that effects must follow causes. Every attribute of the soul in man suggests the doctrine of her essential immortality. She is placed here under circumstances of manifest trial and preparation, and never has the soul yet died that could conscientiously say, that its occupation had been competent to the capabilities of the principle, or that it had ever yet arrived to

its highest degree of perfect experience. The soul, like time, never retrogrades, but is in the perpetual pursuit after a future ; its prospects are always on the hereafter ; touching its own longings and aspirations, it is already in eternity. What, then, is to follow this rich layer of moral causes but some corresponding effect ? Are all these high anticipations of the future to be levelled in the dust, and answered in the silence of the tomb ? Is there any thing in the *animal* man to suggest these nobly glowing aspirations ? Are they not manifestly of Divine original and source ? Let, then, “ the dust return to the earth as it was ; the *spirit* shall return to God who gave it.” He “ breathed into our nostrils the breath of life.” The breath of heaven was not wasted on the brute that dieth, it must be breathed back again into the bosom of God. Then welcome, thou eternal future, high recompense of present trial ! welcome, sweet balm of immortality, that alone canst heal the wounds which Time, with all her devices, cannot cure ! Alas ! for the poor mind that lives only for the day, taking no thought for that unknown morrow, that for all of us shall begin a sure eternity.

On the other hand, to the practical atheists, whose lips may profess the faith, but whose hearts are "without God, and without hope in the world," be it seriously observed to you, you are even in worse case than the professed unbeliever; his evil life is at least consistent with his evil doctrines, but your lives give the lie to your professions. Moreover, you are dangerous stumbling-blocks in the way of your weaker brethren, and you give great, I had almost said *just*, "occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme." The foolish and worldly friends of the gospel are its most pernicious enemies—enemies in the camp, and enemies of its own household; but they are also the direst enemies to themselves. If the blind man knew there was a pit-fall at the end of the road he was travelling, yet continued walking therein till he fell, would it not be an act of suicide? There are men that walk wilfully blindfold to hell, knowing at every step they take how much nearer they are to condemnation. They know their disease, and know the only remedy; if they persist therein, still forbearing to swallow the healing medicine, trifling with it on their lips till death dash away the cup, who will be to

blame? surely not the good Physician, who offered his balm without money and without price!

There are none of us who will have to lay any blame upon God, for want of sufficient grace and privilege; God grant that we may here have abundant opportunity, and hereafter eternal cause, to praise him for our profitable use of all his gracious ordinances, and especially for that of his holy sabbath, the weekly monitor and type of heaven!

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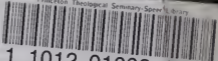








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